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Things I've seen, done and loved this month...

Get ready for a little rustic razzle dazzle this issue as we celebrate the end of one year and the start of another!

Decorate country rooms with shimmer and shine – compliments of the glowing and burnished tones of the season (page 58), be the perfect party host with tables and drinks trolleys styled in our favourite country colour schemes (page 68), and step inside rural properties in Surrey, Norfolk, Berkshire and Essex that glam it up and glow for the festivities (from page 22). In the kitchen, be inspired by our Alpine-feel New Year menu (page 116), where chalet-chic food is the perfect way to serve a crowd at low-key get-togethers. Finally, hear the stories of some of our favourite country folk – gardener and writer Sarah Raven reveals the view she adores (page 146), Sasha Dorey of The English Stamp Company shares her passion for personalised stationery (page 128) and Katy Simpson of home fragrance company Noble Isle tells us why she loves a glass of English fizz at this time of year (page 84).

Here's to the good times... and many of them!

Rhoda x

PS Looking for a last-minute gift? Then why not buy a subscription to Country Homes & Interiors. It lasts all year and we have an amazing offer on page 56.

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Things we can't live without
JANUARY

Giving a simply wrapped bouquet of amaryllis and hyacinths. Fair Isle **tissue paper**, similar from Selfridges. **Tablecloth**, similar from Linen Me. **Decorations**, similar from John Lewis. **Card**, similar from Rifle Paper Co.



1 Cosy cushions with festive motifs. 'Tis the season to be jolly' cushion, 45cm sq, £20, House of Fraser. **2** Glowing candlelight from rustic holders. Small bark tealight holder, H9cm, £6.50, Sass & Belle. **3** Warm metallics on classic lighting. Orlando lamp, H28cm, col Antique Brass, £35, Tesco. **4** Fair Isle patterns decorating snuggly bedlinen. Double duvet set, 200cm sq, with two pillowcases, £50, Debenhams.

Celebrating the start of another year in a beautiful party dress. Lace dress, £129, The White Company.



PINTEREST
For more things we can't live without, follow us at [countryhomesmag](#)



A table decoration that shimmers and sparkles. Mini bell star, £6.99, Retreat Home.



5 A hanky for winter sniffles! Mistletoe hankies, £14.95 for 3, Thornback & Peel. **6** The simplicity of a Scandi-style rug. Indoor/outdoor rug, from £225 (61x91cm), Cuckooland. **7** Toasting chestnuts on an open fire. Fire set, H55cm, £21.55, Roman at Home. **8** Gathering around the table with family and friends. Arundel table, H73xW245xD100cm, £1,350, Neptune. »

COUNTRY DAYS



A pop of colour from winter berries. Faux red berry branches, H25cm, £18.75 each; wooden board, 36cm diameter, £21.50, Nordic House. Bowl, stylist's own.



9 Relaxing at home in gorgeous pyjamas. Christmas Rose pyjamas, £35, John Lewis. **10 Colourful twine to add a finishing touch to gifts.** Garden twine and cutter, H20cm, £18.50, Glyndebourne Shop. **11 Keeping warm under a woolly layer.** Everest Square Cashmere/Merino wool throw, 130x180cm, £148.99, Wool Me. **12 Pouring a drink from the perfect pitcher.** Little bird jug, H22cm, £18, Marquis & Dawe.



13 Chunky knits for fireside lazing. Cable knit cushion, 43cm sq, £12, George. **14 Spreading seasonal cheer with illustrated cards.** Christmas Robin stationery box, £22 for 10 cards/notelets and 20 gift tags, Ella's Place at Not on the High Street. **15 Casting a glow once the midwinter sun has set.** Red lantern, H43cm, £20, Sainsbury's. **16 Keeping up tradition by putting pen to paper.** Quill bureau, H101xW85xD45cm, £695, Loaf.



Elegant tableware with pretty detailing. Fleuris cutlery, £34.50 for 24 pieces; silvered glass cake stand, £34.50, all Within.

Colour of THE MOMENT

MIX BERRY RED, SNOW WHITE AND WARMING NEUTRALS FOR A CLASSIC SCANDI-STYLE SCHEME THAT'S PERFECT FOR MODERN COUNTRY CELEBRATIONS.



Fabrics: Carline (background), col Ecu, £111.30 m, Casamance. (On platter, from top left) Calista Floral Voile, £300 m, Victoria Bain. Lakshmi Rain Ivory Linen, £54 m; Mini Stags, col Red, £49.95 m; Winter, £54 m, all Peony & Sage. **Card**, similar from Paperchase. Victorian star **brooch**, £10, Accessorize. Eaton Place serving **plate**, £9.99, Butlers. Fair Isle **cracker**, £25 for 10, House of Fraser. Sawn Oak **flooring**, £33.53 sq m, Harvey Maria. Mini zinc **buckets**, similar from Hobbycraft. **Paint** (in buckets, from left): Crimson, £41 for 2.5L Flat Emulsion, Zoffany; Chestnut, £32.92 for 2.5L Lime Wash, Bert & May. Bobbin and silver ribbon, stylist's own.

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Home notes

We want this now...

It's all about the distressed look when it comes to leather sofas. Stylish, comfy and upholstered in a hard-wearing beaten walnut hide, the Pudding sofa, £1,995, from Loaf, only improves with age. Handmade to order in rural Derbyshire, it would sit well in any country living room.



OUR FAVOURITE DESIGNER

Becky Broome

As well as producing their own collection of wittily etched glassware, Becky and her husband and business partner, Kristian, engrave bespoke messages to lend a personal touch to special occasions.

Tell us how the business started... I knew from an early age that I wanted to run my own company. I come from a family of entrepreneurs so it must be in the blood. Kristian and I liked the idea of bringing something fun to important milestones and occasions, such as a glass of bubbly to remember for years to come. **What's your favourite design and why?** It has to be our Hip Hip Hooray champagne glasses (£90 for four, Not on the High Street). They add meaning to any celebratory toast, from weddings and birthdays to welcoming in the New Year. **What inspires you?** That magical moment between the recipient and giver when a present is opened. There's a light-hearted happiness that runs through our collection, which never fails to please. We love making people chuckle,



and our pithy phrases always seem to do just that. **What makes your company special?** Our customers often buy our pieces as gifts, and a lot of love and care go into choosing something they think their loved ones will like. We want them to know that love and care have gone into the making of their order, too. We're also proud to say that all our glassware is hand-etched in our Cheshire studio, not mass-produced outside the UK. **Describe your creative style in three words.** Simple, witty and fun.



Call 0345 259 1359, or visit notonthehighstreet.com/beckybroomeltd.

(From back) Shadow Cube cushion, £160; Shadow Magnus throw, £420, both Melanie Porter.



Textural...on trend... warm, cosy comfort

Snuggle up in chunky knits

Touchy-feely knitted textiles have had a supersize makeover! Large-scale knits are high on our deep-winter wishlists as designers experiment with giant knitting needles and ultra-soft unspun yarns. Melanie Porter's ombré designs (above) feature chunky throws and cushions in 100% British wool that's hand-dyed to create a striking shadow effect – ideal for adding warmth and cosiness to rustic bedroom schemes with exposed brickwork. For a bolder design statement, Lauren Aston creates chunky stitch cushions in an array of vibrant rainbow shades, including mustard, hot pink and turquoise, from her little studio in Devon – the perfect antidote to dull winter days.

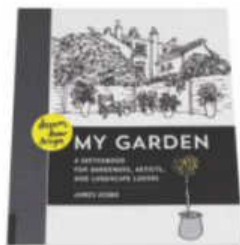
Top table beauties

Popular US brand Canvas Home has launched in the UK, offering artisan-made ceramics, glassware and textiles to add personality to your home. We love the matte finish cutlery in Gold or Black, £63 for a five-piece set, Selfridges. Either colour will bring rustic glam to New Year's Eve dinner parties.



Garden notes

We want this now...



Winter is the time to dream and scheme, and this garden sketch book will help you to do just that. It's filled with ideas and prompts that will inspire you to visualise and plan for a gorgeous garden next year. *Dream, Draw, Design My Garden* by James Hobbs (wordery.com, £16).

OUR FAVOURITE CONTAINER GARDENER

Emma Hardy

Author of *The Winter Garden* (CICO Books, £14.99), Emma fills pots and troughs creatively to keep your plot looking and smelling fabulous even in the winter months.

How do you get through the cold months? I actually like winter. Summer can feel quite stressful in the garden, as there's so much to do - I can't keep up! I like slowing down a bit and taking stock. For winter cheer, containers are the way to go. Don't just stick to pansies - plant big pots of shrubs and flowering perennials, crammed in for impact. And don't forget vegetables and herbs - it's such a treat to be able to pick lettuce in winter.

What's in bloom in your garden now? My hellebores are at their best. I especially love the deep purple and lime green varieties. I have a beautiful winter clematis, *Clematis cirrhosa* 'Freckles', outside my back door, which is a joy at this time of year.

What are you planning for the year ahead? I'm putting in a summerhouse at the end of the garden, and I'm really excited about that. I'm also getting rid of one of my raised veg beds and



growing my vegetables in borders instead - cavolo nero, French beans (the purple-black ones look fantastic) and courgettes. Strawberries at the front of borders look brilliant, too.

What else are you growing to eat this year? Lots of lettuce and rocket. I've promised myself that next year I'll only grow what will actually be eaten! So that also means cabbages, courgettes, squash, beetroot and beans. Plus rosemary, parsley, thyme and chives.

What inspired you to write the book? I like a challenge. Gardening in winter can be



tricky. I was interested to see what I could do and to stretch myself.



The most natural present you can give...

Give pots of promise

Pots of hippeastrum (amaryllis) make a thoughtful present for a plant lover at this time of year. Plant each one in a pot a little larger than the bulb itself and fill with multipurpose compost, leaving two-thirds of the bulb showing above the surface. Water sparingly and stand them inside in a light-filled spot, turning the pots regularly to stop the growing stems bending towards the light. For a nice finishing touch, present them in a basket filled with winter foliage, such as holly or ivy. Bulbs planted now will flower inside in February, the stout stems budding up and opening to reveal exotic bold trumpets of red, pink or white flowers.

WINTER COLOUR



***Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' and its sweet-scented Barbie-pink flowers appear on bare woody stems from November to February. For a brilliant effect, plant with a clear vista behind, so the pink pops against a blue winter sky. A 9cm pot costs £10.99, from Thompson & Morgan.**

FEATURE FRANCESCA CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHS (BOOK) RHAPSODY (EMMA HARDY) DEBBIE PATTERSON/CICO BOOKS 2015; (AMARYLLIS) GAP PHOTOS; (VIBURNUM) ZARA NAPIER/GAP PHOTOS

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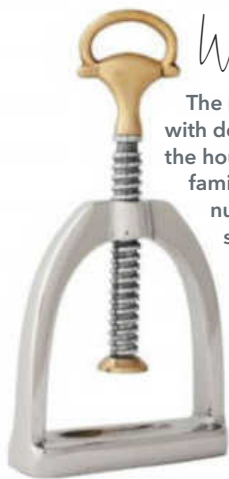
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Food notes



We want this now...

The ritual of filling stoneware bowls with delicious nuts is all part of getting the house ready for the arrival of family and friends. We've found a nutcracker that's easy to use and stylish, too, while also something of a conversation point. Artisan crafted with meticulous care, the Baron nutcracker by Eichholtz is handmade and hand-finished in nickel and brass. Measuring H23xW14x D5cm, it's available for £109 from Harrods.

OUR FAVOURITE SEAFOOD SUPPLIER

Paul Trudgian

Founder of Cornish family-run business Fish for Thought, Paul started his career making chips for McCain Foods. After working all over the UK and the Continent, he yearned to return to his family roots in Cornwall and start his own business. Fish for Thought was launched in May 2007, the first online business offering fresh fish and seafood delivered direct from Cornwall.

What makes Fish for Thought so special? We operate at the heart of the Cornish fishing industry with unparalleled access to a range of sustainably sourced fish and seafood. Our team delivers fantastic quality and service every time.

Any seasonal serving suggestions? Seafood is a great choice for the festive season, especially lobster, crab and scallops. One of my favourite prawn recipes from our website for feeding a crowd is Hot Tigers with Cool Dip. This is also a perfect time to cook a special fish like turbot - we have a lovely recipe for it on the website



with white wine and fennel.

Any tips for last-minute entertaining? Customers can enjoy our new seafood dishes, such as Cornish Lobster Bisque and Lobster, Mac and Cheese, made by our fantastic head chef Andy, using Cornish seafood.

Have you won any awards? I was so proud to have been voted *Cornwall Life* Food and Drink Food Hero 2011, and Cornish Fishmonger of the Year 2012. I'm a Rick Stein Food Hero, was a judge on BBC3's Young Fishmonger of the Year and part of a *Which?*

tasting panel recently.

More details at fishforthought.co.uk, 01208 262202.



*Bursting pink bubbles...
English vineyard flavours*



Raise a glass

Sparkling English rosé served as an aperitif - what better way to kick off a celebration lunch. You may think of rosé as a summer drink, but it works really well with entertaining menus at this time of year. Partner a light Pinot Noir-based rosé with olives or seafood and goat's cheese hors d'oeuvres. Cuvée Rosé, £25.99, by Sussex-based Bolney Estate is a sparkling wine with notes of light cherry and toasty brioche, perfect with canapés. Gusbourne Estate's Rosé, £32.99, is a blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes grown on Kent soil. With notes of peaches and sherbet and a shortbread finish, it's lovely with charcuterie or rich puds. Cheers!

Biscuit bliss

Fudge's has been baking treats in the Dorset village of Stalbridge since 1916. Roasted Almond Blisscuits are a scrummy mix of buttery biscuit and toasty almonds in melting milk chocolate, great with a mid-morning cappuccino or afternoon tea. £9.51 for two packs, available from Amazon.



Out & about



*Breathtaking...
enchancing...*

Stroll in a winter garden

When you need a break from the indoor festivities, wrap up well and head outside to enjoy a beautiful winter garden sparkling with frost. At the National Trust's Anglesey Abbey Garden in Cambridgeshire (above) meandering walkways attract pale winter sunshine to nurture more than 150 plant species specially chosen for their colour and scent, including everything from scarlet willow and red-barked dogwood to sarcococca, mahonia and winter-flowering honeysuckle (nationaltrust.org.uk). Or make your way to RHS Wisley in Surrey, where conifers, icy lakes and magical-looking silver birches compete for your attention (rhs.org.uk).

The place to eat...

A delicious seasonal menu awaits at the Crown & Garter, near Hungerford, Berkshire, a country pub that offers great British meat and fish dishes in stylishly refurbished surroundings. Explore the pub's coffee shop and bakery, or book a stay in one of the comfy rooms set in a courtyard apart from the main building. Call 01488 668325, crownandgarter.co.uk.



A MINDFUL NEW YEAR

Start afresh! Begin 2016 with a calmer approach at Hawkwood College in Gloucestershire, where in a relaxed country setting mindfulness expert Sam May teaches students how to gain clarity and focus in order to achieve goals. The residential break, A Mindful New Year, 1-3 January 2016, costs £260 including a single room and all meals. Contact 01453 759034, hawkwoodcollege.co.uk.



OUR FAVOURITE SHOP

Betty & Violet

Ali Hocking sells pretty handmade treasures, as well as antiques and decorative vintage items in her country-style shop in Worcestershire.



What inspired you to open your shop? It was a lifelong dream. Having participated in vintage fairs across the south of the country for the past six years where I met like-minded customers, I was inspired to create a space where my displays could last longer than one day. I love merchandising, and creating different areas in the shop that reflect rooms in a house or garden seems the perfect way to showcase beautiful things.

How would you describe the shop's style? Quirky, romantic and unashamedly feminine, with a French-Nordic theme; definitely a girls' shop, although men are very welcome, too. It's somewhere to browse, linger and take time to absorb the many different pieces I have sourced specially for my customers.

What's your range like?

The colour palette is always soft, pastel and easy to live with - gentle faded fabrics, crinkled linens and old Creamware ceramics, silver plate, lace and vintage handbags all rub along nicely together. I also make

a selection of decorative items by hand entirely from antique and vintage fabrics and trims - each one is a unique piece that bears the Betty & Violet label. I stock a beautiful range of goods from Denmark, too, as well as Scandinavian books and magazines that are not widely available in the UK. I also offer pieces created by talented friends and fellow vintage addicts.

What makes your shop special? Betty & Violet specialises in high-quality vintage goods that look right together. I like to make it easy for customers to achieve the same style in their own homes.

**Betty & Violet,
14 Cotswold Court,**

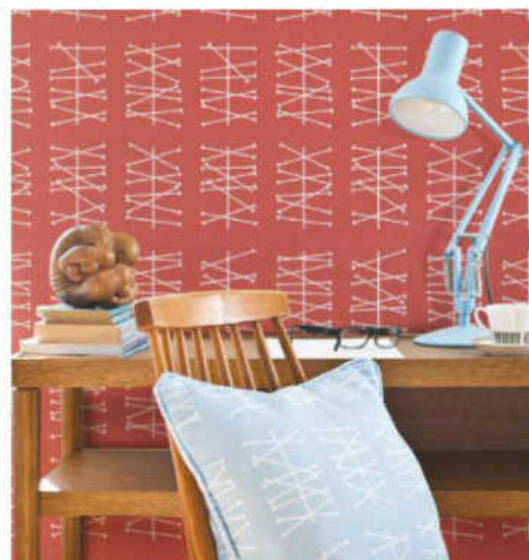


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All wrapped up

MAUREEN DEW'S ELEGANT GEORGIAN HOME MAKES AN ENCHANTING SETTING FOR A TRULY MAGICAL GET-TOGETHER



House A wreath including pheasant feathers adds a welcoming touch to the front door. *Wreath*, Kingfisher Farm Shop. *Lanterns*, Bardoe & Appel.

Orangery sitting area

This light-filled spot is perfect for a tree hung sparingly with silver decorations. **Sofa, chair,** La Residence Interiors. **Walls,** painted in Skimming Stone by Farrow & Ball. »





Halfway The focal point of this large space is the fireplace. Faux thyme plants in urns, Oka.



Orangery dining area
The pale palette creates an inviting atmosphere for elegant entertaining.



The seasonal tea set comes out every year. Christmas Tree tableware, Spode.

What we love most about living here...

‘Our home has more than two dozen windows so, looking out over the fields at the end of the day, we often enjoy amazing sunsets’



Living room Pops of red give a neutral scheme a festive twist. Table painted in French Linen by Annie Sloan. Glass dome, Bone Interiors.



Kitchen The marble-topped island is the main gathering point when family come to stay at Christmas. **Kitchen units**, Neptune. Painted in Limestone and Charleston Gray by Farrow & Ball. **Range**, Rangemaster. »





Living room

Upholstery with smart tailored details creates a comfortable, formal look. Ottoman, armchairs, similar from La Residence Interiors. Curtain fabric, Kate Forman.

Passionate about spotting beautiful and unusual houses since she was a little girl, Maureen Dew enjoys putting the final festive touches to her welcoming Georgian home. 'After renovating more than 40 houses, I've finally found the perfect place to enjoy Christmas in truly traditional style,' says Maureen.

She was ecstatic when, aged only 19, she bought her first house – a rather tired Victorian terrace packed with original features. 'It was a major undertaking, done on a shoestring,' says Maureen. 'At that stage I was into art deco and I had an absolute ball decorating from top to toe, painstakingly deliberating over every paint colour.' Once the house was completed, however, Maureen couldn't wait to sell it and start another project.

'I absolutely adored the challenge of breathing new life into gorgeous but neglected character properties,' she says. 'In my mind I had a tick-list of the types of homes I wanted to live in, and this all-consuming desire led to many fabulous projects, not to mention fascinating experiences...'

Over the years, she and her husband, Jeremy, have renovated everything from a magnificent chateaux near Bordeaux and a villa near St Tropez, to a string of stunning houses in Britain. 'I feel that renovating a house is similar to painting a picture. Once every detail is perfect, it's time to move on,' says Maureen.

Two years ago, as the couple were close to finishing a long project on a large rundown hotel in Surrey, they happened upon an advertisement for a handsome Georgian property, in a rural location near Guildford. 'I thought its proportions were wonderful and, from outside, it resembled a very pretty doll's house.'

Keen to find out more, the couple set up a viewing and were elated the minute they walked into the grand hallway. 'Everything was already done, and to an exceptionally high standard,' says Maureen.

They moved in during November 2013, and began putting their stamp on everything. 'We've gradually been working our way through the house, ringing the changes with soft furnishings and paint colours, buying some new pieces of furniture and injecting a modern country feel,' says Maureen.

Apart from personalising her own home, Maureen has been busy setting up a new home-staging company, Smoke & Mirrors. 'I'm working with my daughter, Verity Webster, and our friend Sarah Gordon, who owns Bone Interiors,' says Maureen. 'It's a new challenge in interior design and very satisfying,' she adds.

Maureen looks forward to spending time at home with her family at Christmas. 'The grandchildren's enthusiasm is contagious,' she says. 'On Christmas Day everyone heads into the living room to take a turn singing, dancing or reading a story. It's very special.'

☎ **Smoke & Mirrors, smokeandmirrorsstyling.com. »**



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Maureen Dew, a partner in home-staging company Smoke & Mirrors, who lives here with her husband, Jeremy, a property developer and business consultant, and their long-haired Jack Russell, Alfie, and Maine Coon cat, Poppet. She has two grown-up children, Dan and Verity.

House A five-bedroom detached Georgian home with annexe. Built in 1760, extended in the 19th century and again in 2012.





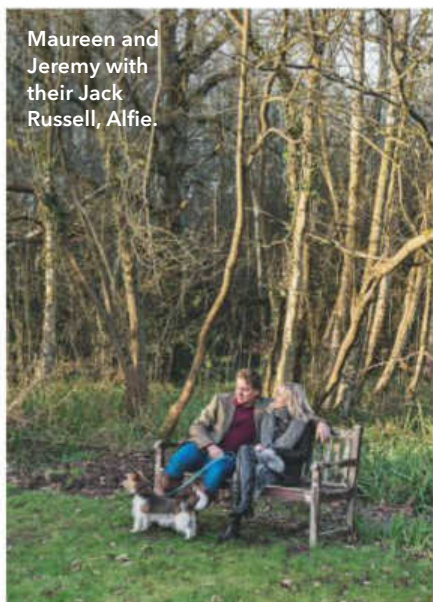
Guest bedroom
A painted four-poster bed and bedside chests give the room a French country feel. **Bed, chests,** Maisons du Monde.



Bathroom
Woven rattan baskets soften the look of the hotel-style unit.



What makes this house a home...
'We enjoy being so close to nature. Occasionally, deer tentatively approach the house and they have been known to peep in through the back windows'



Maureen and Jeremy with their Jack Russell, Alfie.



FEATURE JANET McMEekin PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL
NB BURNING CANDLES SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT UNATTENDED

✱
**ON OUR
DOORSTEP...**

Visit... 'Polesden Lacey (01372 452048, nationaltrust.org.uk/polesden-lacey), near Dorking, a wonderful Edwardian mansion with beautiful grounds.'

Shop at... 'La Residence Interiors (01403 752245, laresidenceinteriors.co.uk), Alfold, which sells French-inspired handmade furniture, from a beautiful old barn [open by appointment].'

Go for a meal at... 'The Thai Terrace (01483 503350, thaiterrace.co.uk), Guildford, a chic rooftop restaurant with breathtaking views of the North Downs.' »

Main bedroom

Luxurious fabrics with contrasting textures create a rich sumptuous look. **Curtain fabric**, Kate Forman. Faux fur throw, John Lewis.



Add some cheer. Christmas cat **garland**, up to 250cm, £5.50, Pipii. Spode Christmas tree **cup and saucer**, £28.50, Mulberry Hall.



Go for a vintage look. Retro **bar stool**, H76xW38cm, £44.99, Simply Bar Stools. Picnic hamper **basket**, H40xW30cm, £40, Prestige Wicker at Not on the High Street.



**Modern
Country
Classic**

Kitchen island

Kitted out with a good range of cupboards and extras, these units can transform your kitchen.

Need to know...

Designed to make life easy, an island works best for larger kitchens, at least 3.5x3.5m, since you'll need around 1m space between the island and the base units. As well as including practical drawers and cupboards, consider pop-up electrical sockets for the worktop. A sink, dishwasher or hob could also be added, but drainage or ducting for an extractor will be easier if the island is close to an outside wall.

Where to buy...

- Devol for painted country islands.
- Eastburn Country Furniture for a reclaimed wood island.
- Murdoch Troon for 'fit your own' freestanding island units.



Keep it simple. Twig **wreath**, 33cm diameter, £28.75, Gisela Graham at Selfridges. Jamie Oliver **pestle and mortar**, H17.5x16cm diameter, £25, Debenhams.

Be inspired by Maureen's festive kitchen

FIND THE PERFECT CUPBOARD PAINTS

1
2
3



1 Moody Grey; **2** Battleship Grey; **3** Iron Ore, all £49 for 2.5L Water-based Eggshell, Designers Guild.



For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/countryhomesandinteriors



Cook in style. Nexus 110 dual fuel **range cooker**, H898-925xW1100xD600mm, from £2,111, Rangemaster at John Lewis.



Put your best bakes on display. Lovebird glass **cake stand**, H27.5x20.5cm diameter, £34.95, Baker & Maker.

Make it *tranquil*



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Past and present

JANE CAVE'S FAMILY HOME IS FILLED WITH RICH COLOURS,
SUMPTUOUS FABRICS AND A BOHEMIAN SPIRIT

Living room

The brick fireplace was discovered behind a small Victorian one. **Coffee table**, Oka. **Aubergine sofa**, India Jane. **Walls**, painted in Pigeon by Farrow & Ball. >>





Living room The elegant Christmas tree towers above a pile of gifts. **Lamp,** The Old Stables at Bayfield Hall. Velvet cushions, John Lewis.



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Jane Cave, who runs an antiques company, and her husband, Johnny, an arable farmer. The couple live here with their two sons, Ollie, 14, and Toby, 12 (above, with Jane), and their two Labradors, Alfie and Digby.

House Georgian farmhouse with eight bedrooms.

It's Christmas, and in Jane Cave's Norfolk home, large velvet sofas are piled with colourful cushions, candles by the dozen glow on every surface, and presents carefully wrapped in metallic paper and jewel-coloured ribbon are scattered around in anticipation of the festivities ahead.

'There's nothing I like more than being able to shut the door to the outside world and enjoy some quiet time with the children, uninterrupted by work or school pressures,' says Jane who, with husband Johnny and their family, are the lucky occupants of this beautiful Georgian farmhouse. 'Christmas gives me the opportunity to change things around and play with colour,' says Jane. 'Johnny never quite knows what will have arrived or have been changed around when he comes in every evening – and that's not just during the holidays.'

Despite the generous size of the house, Jane has managed to create a cosy and effortlessly stylish home for her family, though some rooms are used more than others. 'We tend to congregate with a cup of tea around the kitchen table, where we usually also eat dinner, and afterwards we'll go and sit in front of the fire in the living room,' she says.

Jane's approach to furnishing this traditional house is simply to choose the pieces that she likes, whatever era they come from. For instance, in the living room, a boldly modern trestle coffee »

What makes this house a home...

'It has grown with us, and is constantly changing. We have steered clear of trends and chosen what we love'

Dining room The table and chairs bring a note of informality to this richly decorated space. Walls, painted in Ball Green by Farrow & Ball. Rug, The Rug Company.

What we love most about living here...
'The slightly bohemian feel it has, with pieces that are old and quirky mixed with contemporary ones'



Kitchen Exposing the old beams and laying a new floor have made the most of this space. **Floorboards**, Norfolk Reclaim. **Chairs**, Cult Furniture. **Clock**, The Leaping Hare Country Store. **Walls**, painted in Welcome by Little Greene.



Kitchen A giant bauble brings fun and glamour. **Bauble**, The Conran Shop. **Votives**, similar from Nkuku.



Hallway The arch is original and perfect for a festive display. **Bird cage**, similar from MiaFleur. **Walls**, painted in Brinjal by Farrow & Ball.

table takes centre stage, surrounded by classic sofas and antique furniture; while in the kitchen, industrial-style metal chairs sit around a large pine table that's dotted with old paint. The enormous dresser, meanwhile, is filled with vintage soda syphons and pressed glass pieces in candy colours. 'I like combining old and new,' says Jane. 'I think the contrast brings out the best in the antiques and contemporary furniture.'

This confidence with mixing styles and colours has been developed thanks to a career in antiques, forged after she moved to Norfolk two decades ago when Johnny decided to take on his family's farm. Jane needed a way of earning money in this remote part of the country that would also give the couple the flexibility to raise a family in the future, too. Jane had previously worked at Christie's auction house in London and her family home certainly benefits from her buying skills. 'Over the years, renovating the house has allowed me to realise what I like, and what I don't,' she says. 'Luckily, I've been able to experiment, move objects around or simply store them ready for sale if I discover what I've picked doesn't work.'

But it wasn't a case of just finding the right furniture when they moved in here, the interior also needed a fair amount of redecoration. 'There had been a series of farm managers >>



Jane groups glass bottles, colourful accessories and glimmering candles to make a beautiful arrangement. **Candlestick**, The Old Stables at Bayfield Hall. **Bottles**, similar from Not on the High Street.

Bathroom

Originally a bedroom, this is now a luxurious retreat. **Bath**, similar from Holloways of Ludlow. Stag cushion, John Lewis.



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Holkham Hall (01328 713111, holkham.co.uk), for its magical Christmas celebration.'

Shop at... 'The Old Stables at Bayfield Hall (01263 715538, bayfieldhall.com) near Holt for antiques and homewares.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Crown Inn (01485 528530, crowninnnorfolk.co.uk) at East Rudham. It's great for locals and holidaymakers, and they serve Johnny's asparagus in season!'

living here for the previous 40 years who, understandably, hadn't done any renovations, they'd just lived with whatever they inherited, including woodchip paper on every wall and on some of the ceilings, too,' says Jane. 'I can't blame them, it took a lot of steaming to get it all off!

'It was certainly a huge project and I knew that, due to finances, it would have to be done over a long period, room by room. Initially, we put in a new kitchen and bathroom and did up a bedroom so it was at least habitable for the two of us. Since then, we've been decorating the rooms in order of urgency.'

Twenty years on, there are still rooms upstairs that need work, but as they aren't a priority, Jane and Johnny have had a second go at the kitchen, exposing the beams, fitting new units and an oak floor, and adding two extra windows either side of the Aga and an external door providing direct access outside.

Jane has created such a warm and relaxing space, no wonder the family enjoy spending time here together, but it has been a long time coming. 'In the early days, I felt frustrated at the thought of the house being an ongoing project. But with hindsight, I think it gives our home a more individual and quirky feel than if we had done the whole thing in one go,' she says. 'We also like that it's not too perfect. We'll certainly be enjoying our quiet family Christmases here for many years to come.' »



Guest bedroom Rich colours and textures create a lavish style. Walls, painted in Green Blue by Farrow & Ball. Curtains, Designers Guild. Throw, John Lewis.



Be ready for festive feasting. Christmas Delights **tea towel**, £9.95, Clare Loves. Heritage Blue Supreme **table**, from £895, Lilly Lory.



Add some sparkle on a large scale. Giant antique glass **bauble**, 15-25cm diameter, from £11.99, Protect the Planet.



Modern Country Classic

Artisan sink

Make a change from ceramic, with an eyecatching sink made from the materials of the moment.

Need to know...

The classic shape of a fireclay butler or Belfast sink is never out of place in a country home, but for an individual stamp on your kitchen, consider copper. Its wonderful patina and hammered finish will look superb teamed with a bronze tap. To look after it, avoid abrasive cleaners, harsh detergents and too much contact with acidic foods. Alternatively, choose a teak sink to suit your space, but be careful not to scour the surface.

Where to buy...

- Brass & Traditional Sinks for copper sinks.
- Holloways of Ludlow for a stainless steel Belfast sink.
- William Garvey for a teak sink.



Pick a chair in a contrasting style. Tolix **chair**, H85xW51xD46cm, col Glossy Raw Steel, £199, Made in Design.

Be inspired by Jane's kitchen diner

FIND THE PERFECT WIDE FLOORBOARDS



1 190mm Distressed Antique Grey, £41.99 sq m; **2** 220mm Distressed Antique Unfinished, £31.99 sq m; **3** 220mm Distressed Antique Chalk White, £33.99 sq m, all engineered oak, Luxury Flooring & Furnishings.



Make time to dine. Watford wall **clock**, 40cm diameter, £85, Newgate Clocks. Home Collection rubberwood end-grain **chopping board**, 47x35cm, £40, Debenhams.



For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/countryhomesandinteriors



Take inspiration from a traditional farmhouse look. 13-amp electric 4-oven **range**, H85xW149xD70cm, col White, from £8,925, Aga.

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A photograph of a modern country interior. The space features a vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams and rafters. On the left, a kitchen island with white cabinets and a dark countertop holds a sink with a chrome faucet, a bowl of nuts, and some glasses. In the background, a white sofa and an orange armchair with a fur throw are visible. The floor is made of large, light-brown tiles. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

Keeping it relaxed

LYNDA BYWATER'S WELCOMING HOME IS THE PERFECT
SETTING FOR A MODERN COUNTRY CELEBRATION



Kitchen Lynda wanted the look of a traditional timber-framed barn for her new kitchen extension, which was constructed by English Heritage Buildings. **Units**, Pronorm. **Walls**, painted in Salix by Little Greene. **Pendant lights**, Cameron Peters. >>



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Lynda Bywater, who runs her own interior design business, Lynda Bywater Interiors, her husband David, an IT consultant, and their son, William, 13. They bought the house in 2006.

House A Grade II-listed, four-bedroom farmhouse dating from the early 1700s.

The Bywater family love nothing more than a traditional family Christmas and this old house, which was once a working dairy, rises beautifully to the challenge. A vintage sledge laden with presents lies under the Christmas tree; fresh ivy gathered from the garden encircles every candle on the table; and mince pies and stollen are piled high, ready for a festive feast.

Lynda and David Bywater bought the house in 2006 when the arrival of their new baby changed their ideas about living in a big town. 'We decided to look for a place in a village, near a good school and where we could enjoy cycle rides,' says Lynda.

Originally, the farm was a very different property. 'It started life as a two-up, two-down, but had been added to over the centuries,' she says. 'It was always a working farm – we even met someone who remembered getting his milk from here in the 1970s.'

When Lynda and David arrived, there were only three bedrooms, and an ugly flat-roof extension incorporated the small kitchen. Planning permission had already been given to demolish the adjacent oak garage and shed and build a larger version in its place, add a new kitchen extension and a separate two-storey extension. 'We thought that it was crazy to demolish the existing garage,' says Lynda. 'Instead, we decided to convert it into a studio with a shower room and link it via a glazed passageway to the main house.'

Revised planning consent was needed but, after a few months, Lynda and David had permission to convert the old garage and link it to the new kitchen extension with a newly designed entrance. As they wanted a timber-framed kitchen, they hired oak-frame specialists »

What makes this house a home...
'It is cosy and full of character – and feels exactly the right size for the three of us'

Seating area The distinctive coffee table is an old Indian chest that was found in the couple's previous garage. *Sofa*, Wesley-Barrell, covered in Linara linen union by Romo. *Jacob sheepskin throw*, Wildlife Products. *Table lamp*, Porta Romana.



What we love most about living here...

‘The countryside location is great for cycling and walking. Our garden is also a joy – even in the winter it has an attractive shape and form’



Living room This space is mainly used when entertaining. **Coffee table, armchair, fruitwood commode** (left), Youlls Antiques. **Mirror** (left), Newbury Antiques Fair. **Lamp**, Porta Romana.

English Heritage Buildings, while the new two-storey extension was built by a local builder. David himself tackled the improvements to the garage, adding insulation [because it's a music studio] and underfloor heating. With previous experience doing up properties, Lynda and David were used to living with builders' mess, even though it meant washing dishes in a shower room and moving the range cooker into the hall.

The design of the kitchen and the decorating scheme throughout were down to Lynda. 'We eat in the kitchen, so I wanted it to look quite smart,' she says. 'We went for a contemporary, lacquered style and a large, central island. We use it at breakfast time and it's also where we have drinks when we entertain.'

Most of the furniture from the couple's previous house fitted well into its new home, although Lynda, who is passionate about quality fabric, splashed out on new upholstery for several of the chairs and sofas. Her design style is a careful balance of old and new, with an emphasis on fresh colours teamed with natural fabrics and materials.

'I like a modern take on the country look while also enjoying the classics,' she says. 'I aim for a clean, bright finish, but I like to add a twist or a slant. If I use existing furniture or antiques, I try to incorporate them in the house in a new way or place them in a different room or part of the home,' she says.

Christmas is when the house really comes into its own. Relaxing is the main aim. 'We don't plan a lot because it is David's downtime,' says Lynda. 'He is one of four children, so siblings come and go on Christmas Day and I normally cook for eight. There's plenty of space in the house for everyone to chill out – just how we like it.'

☎ **Lynda Bywater Interiors, 01635 255257, lyndabywater.com. >>**



*

ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Highclere Castle (01635 253210, highclerecastle.co.uk) near Newbury. As well as the castle, there are lovely walks around the estate. It's popular with fans of *Downton Abbey*, which was filmed there.'

Shop at... 'Cooper & Cooper (01488 208104, cooperandcooper.co.uk) in Hungerford - a family-run business selling furniture, accessories for the home and gifts.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Flower Pot Café (01635 46439) in Newbury. It's a small independent café serving quality homemade cakes, full breakfast and lunches.'

Main bedroom

Lynda loves using sheepskins and reindeer hides as throws. Reindeer hide, Wildlife Products. Headboard, covered in Linara linen union by Romo. Cherrywood coffer, Youlls Antiques. Ceiling light, Objet Insolite.

Modern Country Classic



Linen chest

Keep spare blankets, sheets, pillows and throws within easy reach.

Need to know...

Wooden chests are as practical today as they were in Medieval times, when they were guardians of linens, clothing, documents and money. From the simplest construction using six wide oak boards, they developed to feature panelling, decorative carving, intricate marquetry or elaborate painted scenes. Like any furniture that's regularly handled, your new chest needs a practical finish that will stand the test of time.

Where to buy...

- **Period Oak Antiques** for original carved chests and coffers.
- **The Cotswold Company** for panelled blanket boxes.
- **Newtons** for intricately carved, painted blanket boxes.



Choose simple accessories. Framed Truffle print, £25, Bonnie & Bell at Not on the High Street. **Blanket**, £29.99, Zara Home.



Cast a warm glow. Curlicue chandelier, H72x76cm diameter, £655, Oka.

Be inspired by Lynda's loft bedroom



Introduce textures. Bantry weave cushion, 50cm sq, col Soft Green, £12, Marks & Spencer. Reindeer hide, £195, Cox & Cox.



For more ideas go to housetohome.co.uk/countryhomesandinteriors

Sleep in style. Foxtail double bedstead, H130xW143x L201cm, col Linen, £675, Button & Sprung.

FIND THE PERFECT

SISAL CARPET



1 Sisal Herringbone Hockley, £42.38 sq m; **2** Sisal Basketweave Summer Hamper, £41.91 sq m; **3** Sisal Bouclé Buckler's Hard, £38.14 sq m, all Alternative Flooring.

Best dressed

EVERY ROOM IN FIONA GALLEY'S EDWARDIAN HOME
RECEIVES A STYLISH MAKEOVER FOR THE FESTIVITIES



Living room Fiona has created a classic scheme with a modern twist that sits well with the period features. Buttoned linen sofa, Rose & Grey. Fireside chair, Laura Ashley. Fire screen, Dibor. Rug, Rockett St George. Mirror, Brissi. »





AT HOME WITH...

Owners Fiona Galley, who is a journalist and her husband, Tim, who works in oil production. They live here with their son, Eben, three.

House A five-bedroom Edwardian property.

Christmas is always a magical time, but never more so than when you have small children. And there's plenty of excitement in the lead-up to the festivities in Fiona Galley's house. 'Christmas is definitely a highlight of the year,' she says. 'I love dressing up our home. I start at the beginning of December and decorate it differently each year.'

Home, where Fiona lives with husband Tim and three-year-old son Eben, is an elegant Edwardian villa close to the sea. But it took the couple some time to find their forever home. 'We wanted a house with lots of character, and must have viewed over 30 properties but just couldn't find the right one. We felt very dejected. Then, one evening we went to view this house and knew instantly it was for us. It had period features in abundance – encaustic tiled hall floor, large fireplaces and high ceilings.'

When they went back and saw the house in daylight, however, they realised how much work it needed and that the decor was crying out for an update. 'The nursery had Liverpool United wallpaper, while Eben's room was in turquoise and mustard!'

Fiona and Tim began the structural work around three months after they moved in. 'The kitchen was tiny for the size of the house, so we knocked »

Kitchen

This busy space shouts 'vintage'. **Wallpaper**, Studio Ditte. **Wirework racks**, Cox & Cox. **Glass jars**, Garden Trading. **Bowls**, Next. **Cake stand**, Betty's. **Christmas treats**, Betty's.

Hallway

Ribbons and baubles in red to match the floor tiles sing out against white. **Snowflakes**, House of Fraser. **Faux ivy**, Lavenders of London. **Lamp**, Mad Dogs & Englishmen. **Log basket**, John Lewis.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue dress, is standing behind a rustic wooden dining table. She is lighting a tall white candle. The table is set for a meal with white plates, purple placemats, and glasses of red wine. The room has walls covered in a dense, colorful wallpaper featuring various birds and foliage. A large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling. In the background, a white sofa and a doorway are visible.

Dining area Wallpaper with a pretty bird design forms a rustic backdrop. **Wallpaper**, Garden Birds by Cath Kidston. **Table, chairs**, Graham and Green. **Placemats, napkins**, Neptune. **Crackers**, Thornback & Peel.

What makes this house a home...
'It has a warm, family feel and we love its character and quirkiness'



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Alton Garden Centre (01268 726421, alton-gardencentre.co.uk) near Wickford, Essex. We go here as a family at Christmas time to see the magical light displays and to take Eben to meet Santa.'

Shop at... 'Mad Dogs & Englishmen (01702 714766, maddogsandenglishmeninteriors.co.uk) in Leigh-on-Sea. It's a treasure trove of vintage French-style furniture and accessories in a higgledy-piggledy building that just goes on and on.'

Go for a meal at... 'Stop the World Cafe (01702 719969, stoptheworldcafe.com) in Leigh-on-Sea. I love the old-fashioned but glam ambience here - and their homemade cakes are heavenly!'

through to the dining room to create an open-plan kitchen/diner,' says Fiona. The loft room, which is now the stunning main bedroom, was given extra wow factor with the addition of an en-suite bathroom, complete with statement bath and balcony.

Fiona is a firm believer in getting to know a house before deciding on decorating schemes and so waited a while before choosing the look she wanted, opting finally for a backdrop of neutrals. 'Because it's such an elegant house, I wanted the interior to combine a grand look with a homely feel,' she says. 'I was keen to have chandeliers to enhance the high ceilings, but I also wanted the house to be cosy with lots of cushions and throws.'

Country-inspired decor, but with a contemporary twist, is evident throughout. Fiona has added chic touches, such as French-style furniture, plantation shutters and elegant chandeliers, while striking wallpapers have been used to create statement walls.

The house lends itself especially well to Christmas, with a roaring fire in the living room, wreaths and lanterns in the hall, and a bay window that seems made for the tree. 'I love the nostalgia of Christmas,' Fiona says, 'and the way the house looks at this time of year. I enjoy the whole routine. I love it all!'

Guest bedroom

A French-style scheme ensures a relaxing feel. **Walls**, painted in White Pepper by Marston & Langinger. **Wall sticker**, Etsy. **Chest**, similar from Lilyben. **Lampshade**, Clarissa Hulse. **Chandelier**, John Lewis. **Bed**, Loaf. **Bedside tables**, Graham and Green. **Throw**, Lombok.

Modern Country Classic



French-style dining table

Highly decorative furniture turns every mealtime into a feast.

Need to know...

Inspired by a time when carving, ornamentation and curves held sway, today's French-style tables still bear the mark of Louis XV's reign, featuring characteristic curvy cabriole legs and a shapely carved apron beneath the table top. As well as fine wood reproductions in cherry or oak, polished to show off the grain, look for painted versions in chalky pale colours or rich Provence-inspired pigments.

Where to buy...

- **Maison Home Interiors** for an oak-topped table with pale, painted legs.
- **Maisons du Monde** for a rubberwood table with black legs.
- **Oficina Inglesa** for unpainted Louis XV tables.



Choose Provençal-style seating.

Waxed oak rattan **chair**, H95x W53xD62cm, £326, Sweetpea & Willow.



Bring in a little sparkle.

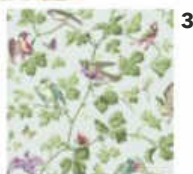
Evangelina glass **chandelier**, H62-162x80cm diameter, £375, Alexander & Pearl.

Be inspired by Fiona's dining room



Place understated extras. Parlane Eton burnished-finish **candlestick**, H12cm, £4.95, Frances Brown Home. Delicate weave **cushion**, col Mauve, £8, Next.

FIND THE PERFECT BIRD WALLPAPER



- 1** Collection of Flowers, Hummingbirds, col 62/1001; **2** col 62/1004, both £99 a roll; **3** Winter Birds, £90 a roll, all Cole & Son.



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Stack up rustic storage. Grey and buff rattan small storage **trunk**, H31xW70x D37cm, £60, The Basket Company.



Set the table. Quilted **placemat**, 35x45cm, col Mole, £6, John Lewis. Stag and mistletoe **crackers**, £55 for 6, Thornback & Peel.

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The background is a light-colored, weathered wooden surface with visible grain and knots. In the top right corner, there is a large, round, copper-colored bell with a black clapper, and a smaller, similar bell hanging from a black ring. A green pine branch is tucked behind the larger bell. In the bottom left corner, there are two more copper-colored bells, one larger and one smaller, both with black clappers, and a green pine branch. The text is centered in a white rectangular area.

Rustic RAZZLE DAZZLE

Give New Year celebrations a little country-style shimmer and shine with the glowing and burnished tones of the season. Put on the glitz in a laid-back way with blush and rust shades, layers of glinting copper and feel-good felted textures anchored with vintage-style finds. Then relax and raise a glass to the good times...



*Raise a glass
by the fire*

Celebrate with friends on a linen sofa styled with plush textures. Woven floor cushions and grain-sack fabrics lend an artisan touch. See page 67 for details. »

*Create a woodland
chandelier*

Hang acorn, pine cone and mushroom
decorations alongside antiqued and
metallic baubles on a simple circular
hanger for a wow centrepiece.
See page 67 for details.





Reflect the glow

Choose pendants, wreaths and decorations in shining rust and copper finishes. Tactile fabrics in luxe velvet and soft linen add a relaxed country feel. See page 67 for details. »

Love toasty layers

Keep colourful throws in a simple metal unit under a display of coats, scarves and bags. Beat winter chills with a woven blanket used as a door curtain and add texture with rustic baskets. See page 67 for details.





Style a winter shelf

Illuminate dark evenings with glowing metallic accessories softly lit by candles, lanterns and lights. See page 67 for details. >>

Take a moment

Add a touch of understated glamour with an elegant lamp and subtle sparkle on cushions and throws. Mulled wine pans and vases shimmer in the background. See page 67 for details.





Hang kitchenalia

Display chopping boards on hanging hooks with decorative star lanterns. Pile table linens in a basket to make it easy to carry it all to the table. See page 67 for details. »

Wake up to a New Year

Fall asleep under soft linen layers in a blend of rusted shades. Hang snowflake curtains at the window and use a vintage sleigh for extra storage at the end of the bed.

See opposite for details.



All the details: PRODUCTS AND PRICES



Pages 58-59



RUSTIC RAZZLE DAZZLE Baubles (clockwise from top): **1 & 2** Glass copper, £19 for 9; **3** Antique copper pointed, £5.50, all The Contemporary Home. **4** Amber cut glass, £4.50, Rockett St George.

RAISE A GLASS BY THE FIRE C-Five **woodburner**, £952, Charnwood. Saturday two-seat **sofa** in Almond Dexter's Linen, £1,320, Sofa.com. **Cushions** (on sofa, from left): **1** Vintage fabric, from £28, Annie Wharton Designs. **2** Ulla Copper, £45, Voyage Maison. **3** Grain sack, from £40, Beyond France. **4** Arionne Platinum, £41.25, Voyage Maison. **5** Vintage red stripe, £35, Annie Wharton Designs. **6** Aviemore Rust, £55, Voyage Maison. **Grain sack**, £40,

Beyond France. **Throw**, £25, Sainsbury's. Jute floor **cushion**, £70, Cox & Cox. (On floor cushion) Multistripe Bracken **blanket**, £225, Melin Tregwynt. **Grain sacks**, from £40 each, Beyond France. Arundel coffee **table**, £590, Neptune. Maiko fruit **bowl**, £62; terracotta water **jug**, £55, Folklore. Copper-rimmed hurricane **lamps**, £9 (small); £25 (large), both Nordic House. **Baubles**, from a selection at Rockett St George, Re and The Contemporary Home. Linen **napkins**, £7.50 each, The Linen Works. Classic **mince pies**, £10 for 12, Bettys. Midas gold-coloured **knife**, £20 for a 16-piece set, George. Floral Copper **wreath**, £49, Rockett St George. Charcoal/Taupe Diamond **rug**, £132, Luma. Champagne flutes, stylist's own.

Pages 60-61



CREATE A WOODLAND CHANDELIER Wire **hanger**, £14, Nordic House. Decorations (from top left), **round**, £5.50, The Contemporary Home. **Mushroom**, £10, Heal's. **Acorn**, £8, House of Fraser. **Tree**, £10 for 6 assorted, Neptune. Mini **acorns**, £6, House of Fraser. **Pine cone**, £10, Heal's. **Star**, £10 for 6 assorted, Neptune. **Wire**, £2, Re. **Pointed**, £5.50, The Contemporary Home. **Faceted**, £2.50, Rockett St George. **Pine cone**, £2.95, Pipii. **Heart**, £10 for 6 assorted, Neptune. **Acorn**, £8, House of Fraser. **Ribbed**, £4, The Contemporary Home. **Mushroom**, £10, Heal's.

REFLECT THE GLOW **Wreath**, as before. **Pendant**, £38, Pooky. **Curtain** in Felbrigg Red, £59 m, Colefax and

Fowler. **Curtain pole**, £20, John Lewis. **Jug**, similar from Homestead Store. **Vases**, from £8 each, Neptune. **Cushions**, (bench) Glendale Rust, £57.50, Voyage Maison. Striped linen, £28; lemon velvet, £32, Annie Wharton Designs. Arbour Biscuit, £30, Voyage Maison. **Stool**, £40; **chairs**, £50 each, Homestead Store. Mimosa Rust **cushion** (on chair), £30, Voyage Maison. **Decorations**: wire, £2, Re. Acorn, £2, Pipii. Glass, £4.50, Rockett St George. (On table) **tablecloth**, Arundel, £69 m, Colefax and Fowler. Wonki **jug**, £60, Luma. **Runner**, from £40; **napkins**, £22 each, Beyond France. **Decorations**, from a selection at Neptune, The Contemporary Home, Rockett St George and House of Fraser. Ivalo **dome**, £80, LSA International. Midas **cutlery**, as before. **Grain sacks**, as before.

Pages 62-63



LOVE TOASTY LAYERS Luna Spice blanket (as **curtain**), £217, Melin Tregwynt. **Basket**, £30 Homestead Store. Knot Garden Ember **blanket**, £217, Melin Tregwynt. **Grain sack**, £40, Beyond France. (On hooks) Robin **scarf**, £16, Bohemia. Edith **bag**, £235, Gaynor Davies-Howell. Charlotte **cape**, £159; chunky knit **scarf**, £59, Boden. Metal **unit**, £245, Oliver Bonas. (On unit, from top) **tumbler**, £15, Rockett St George. **Candle**, £26, Oliver Bonas. **Scarf**, £45, Luma. **Bowl**, £36 for 4, Rowen & Wren. **Jug**; **basket** (lower shelf), find similar at Homestead Store. Luna Spice **blanket**, £217; Multistripe Driftwood **blanket**, £225, Melin Tregwynt. Check **blanket**, £25, Sainsbury's. Bobble **hat**, £39, Boden. Red **scarf**, £30, Seasalt. **Satchel**, £63, Bohemia. Stripe **blanket**, £132, Tolly McRae. Felbrigg Red **fabric**, £59 m, Colefax and Fowler. Luna Autumn **throw**, £179, Melin

Tregwynt. Orange **scarf**, £29.95, Seasalt. Leather **rug**, £160, Graham and Green. **Decorations**, from a selection at Re, House of Fraser, Rockett St George, The Contemporary Home, Heal's and Pipii. Vintage ice-skates, stylist's own.

STYLE A WINTER SHELF SNOW **letters**, £5 each, Re. Hanging candle **holders**, from £6.95 each; antique smoke glass hurricane **lamps**, from £6 each; pine cone **candles**, £11.95 each, Nordic House. Mirrored **wreath**, £33, Re. Copper pine cone **decoration**, £10, Heal's. Small copper pine cone **decorations**, £2.95 each, House of Fraser. Copper house **lantern**, £19, Scumble Goosie. Glitter birch **candles**, from £8 each; aged copper hurricane **lantern**, £34, Nordic House. Other **decorations**, from a selection at House of Fraser, Pipii and The Contemporary Home. Console **table**, £725, Neptune.

Pages 64-65



TAKE A MOMENT Bluebell **chair**, £780, Sofa.com. (On chair) Ravenna Argenta **cushion**, £51.25; Aquilla Pewter sequin **throw**, £161.25, Voyage Maison. Geometric **cushion cover**, £49.95, Luma. **Throw**, Lucas, £42 m, Jane Churchill at Colefax and Fowler. **Lamp**, £195, Graham and Green. **Table**, £165, Loaf. **Vase**, £15, The Contemporary Home. **Teapot**, £52, Folklore. **Mug**, £16.50, Luma. Pine cone **candle**, £11.95, Nordic House. **Candle holder**, £12, Scumble Goosie. (On shelf) **jug**, £20; **vase**, £20, Tom Butcher at Such & Such. Lustre **vase**, £4.50, The Contemporary Home. **Decorations**, from a selection at Rockett St George and The Contemporary Home. **Jugs**, similar from Homestead Store. Copper **pan**, £40, George. **Napkins**; **tea towels**, £22 each, Beyond France. **Sheepskin**, £55, Rockett St George.

HANG KITCHENALIA Peg rail, find similar at Homestead Store. (On peg rail) vintage **watering can**, around £50, I&JL Brown. Pizza paddle **board**, £22.99; oak chopping **board**, £12.99, T&G Woodware. Star brass **candle holder**, £18.95, Rockett St George. Red vintage **chair**, £50, Homestead Store. Beldi **basket**, £24, Bohemia. Oak **larder**, £2,199, Gray & Willow at House of Fraser. (In larder) stoneware **bowls**, from a selection at Homestead Store. **Linens** (also in basket), from a selection at The Linen Works, Nordic House, Homestead Store and Annie Wharton Designs. **Christmas pudding** with chocolate and orange, £20.95; Classic **mince pies**, £10 for 12, all Bettys. **Decorations**, from a selection at Pipii, The Contemporary Home, Rockett St George and House of Fraser. **Wallpaper**, Rost, £60 a roll, Sandberg.

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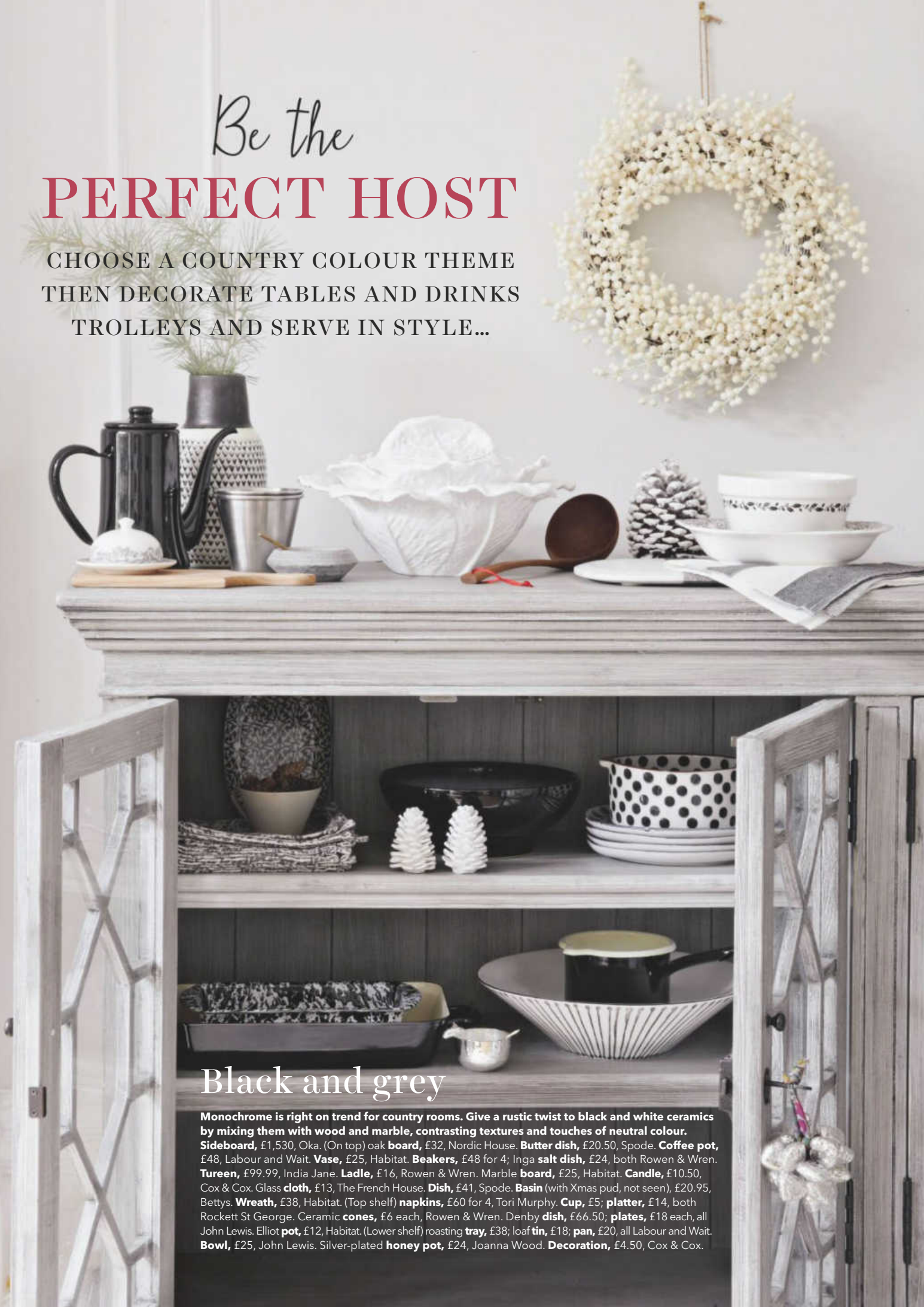


WAKE UP TO A NEW YEAR **Bed**, £999; stripe **pillowcases**, £25 for 2, Gray & Willow at House of Fraser. Holiday **duvet cover** and **pillowcases**, from £36 for a pillowcase, Lexington. **Cushions**, (from left) **1** Aero Copper, £55 m; **2** Ezra Copper, £69 m, Jane Churchill at Colefax and Fowler. **3** Tweed, £97.40, Vanessa Arbuthnott. **4** Vintage red stripe, £35; **5** vintage floral, £32, both Annie Wharton Designs. **6** Melo Orange, £47 m, Jane Churchill at Colefax and Fowler. Taupe Luberon **bedspread**, £135, Loaf. Orange Fox **blanket**, £99, Tolly McRae. Kingsize **quilt**, Stockholm Stripe edged in Plain Linen, £784.81, Vanessa Arbuthnott. Vintage **sledge**,

find similar at Nordic House. Faux fur **throw**, £25, George. **Mug**, £18, Rowen & Wren. **Gift box**, £4.98, Lakeland. Vintage **suitcase**, £45; vintage stool (as **side table**), £140, Homestead Store. **Lamp**, £135, Luma. **Vase**, £20; **mug**, £15, Tom Butcher at Such & Such. **Teapot**, £80, Sue Pryke at Such & Such. **Tumbler**, £15, Rockett St George. Greenwisch **armchair**, £699, Multiyork. **Grain sacks**, as before. Irish linen reversible **throw**, £175, Tolly McRae. **Curtain**, Orpin, £119.20 m, Casamance. **Stag head**, similar from Out There Interiors. **Carpet**, Africa Antelope, £69.80 sq m, Natural Elements Flooring. **Decorations**, as before.

Be the PERFECT HOST

CHOOSE A COUNTRY COLOUR THEME
THEN DECORATE TABLES AND DRINKS
TROLLEYS AND SERVE IN STYLE...



Black and grey

Monochrome is right on trend for country rooms. Give a rustic twist to black and white ceramics by mixing them with wood and marble, contrasting textures and touches of neutral colour.

Sideboard, £1,530, Oka. (On top) oak **board**, £32, Nordic House. **Butter dish**, £20.50, Spode. **Coffee pot**, £48, Labour and Wait. **Vase**, £25, Habitat. **Beakers**, £48 for 4; Inga **salt dish**, £24, both Rowen & Wren. **Tureen**, £99.99, India Jane. **Ladle**, £16, Rowen & Wren. Marble **board**, £25, Habitat. **Candle**, £10.50, Cox & Cox. Glass **cloth**, £13, The French House. **Dish**, £41, Spode. **Basin** (with Xmas pud, not seen), £20.95, Bettys. **Wreath**, £38, Habitat. (Top shelf) **napkins**, £60 for 4, Tori Murphy. **Cup**, £5; **platter**, £14, both Rockett St George. Ceramic **cones**, £6 each, Rowen & Wren. Denby **dish**, £66.50; **plates**, £18 each, all John Lewis. Elliot **pot**, £12, Habitat. (Lower shelf) roasting **tray**, £38; loaf **tin**, £18; **pan**, £20, all Labour and Wait. **Bowl**, £25, John Lewis. Silver-plated **honey pot**, £24, Joanna Wood. **Decoration**, £4.50, Cox & Cox.



- 1 Make white china stand out with a dark tablecloth.** Linen tablecloth with fringed edge, 140x225cm, col Charcoal, £110, The Linen Works.
- 2 Offer cheese on cool grey marble.** Dari marble board, £18, Rowen & Wren.
- 3 Name that cheese in one!** Wooden blackboard labels, £2.95 for 6, Pipii.
- 4 Choose a pretty metal floral wreath as a decorative centrepiece.** Aged Metal Rose wreath, £21, Cox & Cox.
- 5 Set out Stilton on a glamorous sparkly cheeseboard.** Silver Marble cheeseboard and knife, £72, Joanna Wood.
- 6 Line up dips or condiments in small pots.**

- Arundel pinch pot paddle tray, £30, John Lewis.
- 7 Give food an appetising look by using white pottery.** Whitby small serving dish, £32, Neptune.
- 8 Serve side dishes in bold patterned bowls.** Elliot baking dish, £12, Habitat.
- 9 Invest in a pretty silver-plated cruet set.** Honey Bee salt and pepper shakers, £39 for 2, Joanna Wood.
- 10 Introduce hints of the forest to the table.** Fraser ceramic pine cone, £6, Rowen & Wren.
- 11 Arrange nibbles on metal trays.** Scalloped-edge zinc tray, £4.50, Nordic House.
- 12 Use serving spoons made from unusual materials.** Hammered copper salad spoon, £26

- (with salad fork, not seen), Oliver Bonas. Black oak spoons, £19.95 for 3, Rockett St George.
- 13 Add a touch of classic monochrome floral.** Delamere Rural footed cakestand, £36, Spode.
- 14 Go for crisp, white kitchen linens.** White fringed cotton tea towel, £6.50, Rockett St George.
- 15 Add a little French country style.** Cocotte terracotta oven-to-table dish with lid, col Vanilla, £42, The French House.
- 16 Liven up the look of white china with an occasional black piece.** Pottery display plate, col Black, £15, Rockett St George.
- 17 Burn a pretty pine cone candle.** Snowy pine cone candle, £10.50, Cox & Cox. »

Give your dining table Nordic charm with crisp stripes and checks in red and white. Add snow-white highlights with painted name clips, ceramics and candles. Bring it all together with the gleam of glass and silver, and scarlet-berried greenery. Harrogate **chair**, from £215, Neptune. Drummond **sideboard**, £1,530, Oka. Sophie Conran Christmas **cake plate**, £54.50, Portmeirion. **Mince pies**, £10 for 12, Bettys. (On table) **tablecloth**, Angus Stripe linen, col Red, £39.50 m, Ian Mankin. **Crackers**, £55 for 6, Thornback & Peel. Beaded **placemats**, £28 for 2, The White Company. Gingham **napkins** (folded as placemats), £24 for 4, Nordic House. Wine **glasses**, £6.50 each, The French House. **Tumblers**, £27 each, English Antique Glass. Dinner **plates**, £12 each, The White Company. Sophie Conran Christmas **soup plates**, £58 for 4 assorted, Portmeirion. **Napkins**, £11 each, The Linen Works. **Ribbon**, 90p m, Jane Means. **Baubles**, £9.50 for 6, Talking Tables. Mini **candelabra**, £22, Rowen & Wren. Robin **jug**, £18, Sophie Allport. Owl **salt and pepper pots**, £5, Berry Red. **Candlesticks**, £12 each, The White Company. **Tealight holders**, £10.95 for 3, Nordic House. Bird **pegs**, £4.99 for 10, Pipii. >>



Metal, glass and pink

Get ready to toast the season with a bar staged on an elegant vintage-looking trolley. Glasses and decanters with touches of soft silver or gold metallics, or in dusky pink and pearly tones are an update on traditional designs, while pretty baubles, tealights and quirky bottle openers and stoppers complete the look.

Trolley, £165, Cox & Cox. (Top shelf) **tray**, similar from India Jane. Gold **flute**, £7 for 2, Tesco. Waterford pink **glass**, £30, John Lewis. **Tumbler**, £40 for 4, Snowden Flood. **Flute**, £7.50, Rockett St George. Rose **goblet**, £7.50, India Jane. Soda **bottle**, £25, John Lewis. Pink **votive**, £4.75; Bergerac **jug**, £175, India Jane. **Bauble**, £5 for 3, Tesco. **Flagon**, £49.50, Parlane International. Crystal **jug**, £29, Rockett St George. **Cocktail spoon**, £4, John Lewis. (Lower shelf) **bottle cooler**, £125, John Lewis. **Tray**, £26.90, India Jane. **Baubles**, from £3.50 each; Pineapple **jar**, £29.95; **tealight**, £4.50, all Parlane International. **Rose**, £22.50; leaf **dish**, £9.90, both India Jane. Luxury selection of Christmas **chocolates**, £55 for 600g, Bettys. Cocktail **shaker**, £29.99, Rockett St George.



FEATURE: SARA BIRD, STYLING: SOPHIE MARTELL, STYLING ASSISTANTS: ROSANNA JOHNSON, MARINA COMBAL, PHOTOGRAPHS: SIMON SCARBORO.
NB BURNING CANDLES SHOULD NOT BE LEFT UNATTENDED



- 1 Cover up party frocks.** Linen apron, col Rose, £35, The Linen Works.
- 2 Serve mince pies on a stylish floral plate.** Butterfly Bloom plate, £75 for 4, Joanna Wood.
- 3 Spoil everyone with yummy treats.** Speciality mince pies, £12.50 for 12, Bettys.
- 4 Add a touch of bling with a gold corkscrew.** Corkscrew with foil cutter, £20, Habitat.
- 5 Slice lemons on a marble board.** Serving board, £32, Nordic House.
- 6 Stock up on pretty glasses.** Lyonnais wine glass, £25 for 4, Marks & Spencer.
- 7 Serve drinks on a pretty floral tray.** Anemone pink tray, £21.50, The French House.
- 8 Hand around after-dinner macarons.**

- 9 Sit a wine bottle on a classic bottle coaster.** Bergerac nickel bottle coaster, £45, India Jane.
- 10 Decorate with pink baubles in contrasting finishes.** Small apple frosted bauble, £1.95, Parlance International. Pink pearl glass bauble, £5 for 3, Tesco.
- 11 Create your own cocktails.** Suede-handle shot measures, from 5-piece bar set, £98, Joanna Wood.
- 12 Shake up a New Year tipple.** Faceted cocktail shaker, £30, Habitat.
- 13 Choose a nickel-trimmed water jug.** Glass and nickel jug, £86, Joanna Wood.
- 14 Introduce a pink tint to your glass collection.** Waterford Rebel martini glass, £30, John Lewis.

- 15 Pick the perfect bowl for olives.** Limoges bowl, £83, Joanna Wood.
- 16 Stop a bottle in country style with a pheasant design.** Bottle stopper, £27, Joanna Wood.
- 17 Bring in more pink.** Haze tumbler, col Blush, £24 for 4; Polka lustre plate, £42 for 4 assorted; Polka bowl, £32 for 4 assorted, all LSA International.
- 18 Make it snappy!** Crocodile bottle opener, £15, Joanna Wood.
- 19 Include a patterned piece.** Paseo oblong serving tray, £82, Joanna Wood.
- 20 Dig into ice cubes with a designer ice scoop.** Vera Wang Debonair ice scoop, £40, John Lewis.
- 21 Reflect the light with a sparkling decoration.** Silver leaf spray, £1.50, Tesco.



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HEARTWARMING DESIGN IDEAS

↑ HOLE IN THE WALL

Make a virtue of quirks in old country properties. If your chimney breast has a tall opening, consider blocking it off mid-height for a grate and using the bottom part for log storage. Variations in brickwork can be disguised with deep, rich paint colours. The absence of a fire surround with this look makes it ideal for smaller interior spaces.



2

2 PERIOD DRAMA

Be sure to retain original Georgian or Victorian fireplaces to add interest and drama. Employ an expert to restore the fire grate, surround and mantel, and have the chimney re-lined to allow for real fires. Alternatively, source an original at a salvage yard or antiques fair, but be sure it chimes with the age of your home.

3 RUSTIC CHARM

If you have an inglenook fireplace, let it take centre stage. Opt for a classic pared-back look instead of installing a woodburner. Richard Billington of The Billington Partnership says, 'A large forged iron fire hood will prevent smoke from filling the room and, when teamed with an iron grate resting on a low pile of bricks, it will create a beautiful and traditional country look.'

4 SET IN STONE

Decorative stone fire surrounds are beautiful, but they don't need to have an open roaring fire. A clean and efficient alternative is a log burner that loses only 20% of heat up the chimney compared with 80% with an open fire. Sue Bagan of Country Kiln advises, 'The size of your fireplace opening restricts the size of the stove being installed, but any stove will reduce your heating bills and add a welcoming focal feature to your home.' »



3



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5 ROCK THE LOOK

Chimney breasts in homes constructed of stone or flint look stunning when pared back to their original state and the glow of flames enhance the stone's natural hues. If you're adding on to an existing interior, consider stones of a different size to the original to create a dramatic sense of scale. You could also add a stripped-back beam as a mantelpiece for candles and decorative items.

6 DOUBLE EXPOSURE

If building work involves removing internal walls, consider retaining the chimney breast and opening it up into the two rooms. Install an eye-catching fire basket and enjoy the warmth it will give both spaces. An inset reclaimed railway sleeper or timber beam makes a stunning rustic fire surround and, when combined with a shelf, makes a great mantelpiece, too.

7 WHITE HOT

Highlight a simple cottage chimneybreast with paint in a pale shade. Charlotte Crosby, Head of Creative, Farrow & Ball, says, 'Painting a fireplace is a quick way to create a focal point. Opt for a soft white, such as Wimborne White, and pair it with warm neutral walls to enhance the natural hues of antique iron, wood and stone.' Whitewash a beam as a mantel for a pretty country feel, too.

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Modern country makes
TAKE A TWIG

GIVE A MANTELPIECE A FESTIVE WOODLAND FEEL WITH BERRIED BRANCHES, WILLOW AND FOREST-FLOOR BOUNTY



Bird's-nest
arrangement

Style tip

Weave pretty ribbons and string into the nest to provide colour and interest.

GET CREATIVE

Style tip

For a more frosty look,
add a sprinkling of
fake snow or crystallised
faux berries.

Woodland
window-pane »





Style tip

Cover the pots with hessian and tie on twiggy decorations to enhance the forest feel.

Twiggy trees

Decorative stars

Style tip

Use beads, mini fir cones or ribbon to add character to your twiggie stars. »



VIDEO

Watch our 'Modern Country Makes' videos at country-days.co.uk

How to MAKE THEM YOURSELF

Bird's-nest arrangement

This delightful decoration provides the perfect place to gather and display miniature presents and novelties. Cluster together some ready-made mini birds' nests onto the mantelpiece. (You can make your own nests with grapevine garlands or branches, shaped into circles.) To add height, raise one or two on a small pile of sliced tree branches. Place wrapped presents and trinkets in the nests, enclosing a few of them with a glass cloche or dome. Finally, scatter with miniature fir cones. Berries in a flower vase (as seen by the woodland window pane, right) beside your arrangement will add extra bursts of festive colour to the mantelpiece.



Nests, from £4.95, Norpar. **Kraft paper**, £2 for 8m, Hobbycraft. Danish display **domes**, £25 (large), £20 (small), £89, both Nordic House. **Wood slices**, £7.90 for about 35, The Essentials Company. **Ribbons, twine**, from a selection, Jane Means. **Vine garland**, similar from Amazon or Etsy.

Woodland window-pane

Create a forest-cabin feel with a square-shaped wreath depicting a window that looks on to bare wintry branches. Choose a pre-formed four-sided wreath, or fashion one with strong florist's wire and cover it with a grapevine garland (available from Amazon or Etsy) secured in place with wreath wire. Attach long lengths of willow-whip twigs around the edge of the frame with wreath wire, then add and tie some twigs going up and across the centre and edges of the window to create a window-pane look. Add some twiggy foliage, cones and berries, secured in place with more wreath wire, before finishing with a little bird wired into the frame.



Square vine **wreath**, £5.75, The Essentials Company. Dry **willow whips**, £3 for 50; willow **twigs**, £4 for 20 sticks, Wreath Making Supplies. Mini **cones**, £4.95 a bag; **berry picks**, £2.99; cone **garlands**, £14.99 each; **robin**, £2.99, all Norpar Barns. Cream stoneware **jug**, from £8.95, Rigby & Mac. **Kraft paper**, as before.

Twiggy trees

These will bring a modern woody touch to a side table. Take 2 long, sturdy twigs and join with a hot glue gun. Twist with wreath wire to support. Now, cut and lay out the crosswise twigs. Starting at the top, cut 2 short twigs of equal length and lay side by side. Repeat and cut 2 more, slightly longer, a finger space below the first 2. Continue, with the twigs gradually getting longer, until you have 2 triangular shapes, but leave enough trunk to push into a pot. Fix the cut twigs on to the trunk, working on one side first with a hot glue gun, according to your original layout. Cool, turn over and repeat. Push oasis into a pot, then push in the cooled tree. Top pot with moss and berries, and decorate the twigs with twine or wreath wire.



Willow **sticks**, £4 for 20, Wreath Making Supplies. **Raffia**, £3.95; **moss**, £11.50; cone **garland**, £14.99, Norpar Barns. **Hessian**, £4 m; papier mâché **box**, from a selection, Hobbycraft. **Ribbon**, as before. **Tray table**, similar from Design Vintage. Jam jar (as tealight holder), stylist's own.

Decorative stars

These designs are great for all the family to enjoy making. They look lovely hung from a mantelpiece, but could work just as well as tree decorations or table scatters. Gather pre-cut bundles of twigs, or cut the twigs to a length of about 10cm each, 5 per star. With wreath wire or string, tie 2 together to create a V-shaped section and repeat. Criss-cross the 2 Vs so that an open end of one meets an open end of the other to make a third point, and join this with more wire or string to secure. Tie a fifth twig across the gap to complete the star shape. Repeat until you have the number of stars you want and tie with twine onto a length of ribbon or grapevine garland before securing along a mantelpiece.



Pre-cut 10cm **twigs**, £2.50 for 50, Wreath Making Supplies. Red **twine**, £6.95, The Essentials Company. **Berries**, from a selection, Norpar Barns. **Kraft paper**, £2 for 8m, Hobbycraft. Grapevine **garland**, similar from Amazon or Etsy.

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH **COUNTRY HOMES**
& INTERIORS



‘SITTING BY THE FIRE IS MY ABSOLUTE FAVOURITE THING IN WINTER’

Noble Isle founder Katy Simpson

A beauty company that uses elderflowers and gooseberries from the Lost Gardens of Heligan, Yorkshire rhubarb and honey gathered from the Scottish Highlands? We just had to find out more about Noble Isle from the woman who set it up. Originally from Northern Ireland, Katy has lived all over the world, but was actually brought up in Buckinghamshire, and she is now back there, living in the attractive village of Winchmore Hill near Amersham. We went to meet her to talk end-of-year celebrations...

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE...

I moved into my beautiful 1890s Rose Cottage two years ago with my two Scoland Terriers (half Westie and half Scottie), Hoagie and Slippers. I love old houses with character and that is what first drew me to the cottage. I had to do some renovation work, opening up the living room to create extra space, as I do most of my work from home. This cottage really is the hub of my inspiration.

IS IT YOUR DREAM HOME? Yes, the cottage is in a lovely village and I can't imagine a better location, as it's right in

the Chiltern Hills – there are always lots of ramblers in the village. I'm also near the Penn Estate, which has pockets of ancient woodland where I love to walk the dogs.

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN THE COUNTRYSIDE?

Long walks with childhood dogs, Boots and Basil, in the Buckinghamshire countryside and then stopping off afterwards for a warming lunch at the pub.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT NOBLE ISLE AND ITS BEGINNINGS?

Noble Isle was the term used in the 15th century for what we now know as Britain. The name captures the essence of the brand because so many of our ingredients are sourced from locally celebrated producers throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. My own story began at university, where I studied fashion. Afterwards, I worked as a buyer for Oasis and Monsoon, then moved from knitwear and accessories to beauty and fragrances, working in product development for Molton Brown. In January 2011, I decided to launch my own company, Noble Isle, with three former colleagues, creating luxury bath and body »





Hoagie and Slippers cannot resist the fireside.



Katy's dream village home.



Noble Isle's Fireside has the spicy aroma of a country inn.



The Grocer at 15 is a must for coffee and cakes and fresh artisan breads.



The ancient woodland in Amersham's Penn House Estate is a dog walker's - and dog's - delight.



The Plough is an easy walk from Katy's home.

I couldn't live without...

‘MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND WOODLAND WALKS WITH HOAGIE AND SLIPPERS’



Katy loves making her own pickles and preserves.





FEATURE SARAH WILSON PHOTOGRAPHS POLLY ELITES; (GOOSE) TIMEINUKCONTENT.COM

products. They are now stocked by Harvey Nichols, Liberty and Fortnum & Mason. The Noble Isle collection takes its inspiration from all over Britain, with fragrances that are reminiscent of misty moorland and old English orchards, windswept coastal cliffs and Highland distilleries. Sources of natural ingredients include perry pear, willow, heather honey and a Scottish spring by the Spey.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU MOST ABOUT LIVING IN THE COUNTRY? Having studied fashion and trend forecasting, one of the things I learned early on is that all colour combinations and patterns are based on nature. I will be out walking with the dogs and see bluebells and bright lime green leaves, or avenues of brown and grey bark, or a great splash of copper-hued leaves, and I will then take these mental snapshots back to the drawing board. My head is always full of natural colour combinations. I use them to get inspiration for the boxes and ribbons for the gift sets.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SHOPS LOCALLY? Old Amersham is so pretty and has a market in the square selling vintage items and plants. After a browse round the stalls, The Grocer at 15 (The Broadway) is the place for coffee, cakes, salads, pasta and artisan breads. It also has sparkling wine from Cornwall and Somerset cheese.

IT'S SUNDAY LUNCHTIME - WHERE DO YOU HEAD? The Plough Inn is the village pub and is run by delightful Italians. It has old fireplaces and a woodburning pizza stove; they bake fresh bread and there's a wonderful wine list. It's just five minutes down the road and I can take the dogs in and enjoy a glass of red wine.

ANY HOT ISSUES LOCALLY RIGHT NOW? Traffic through the village is a big talking point. There are plans to try to fix this with a one-way system.

ARE YOU A COUNTRY COOK? When I moved here I couldn't bear to part with all the fruit trees from my last house, so I dug some up and brought them with

*

**KATY'S
COUNTRY VIBE**

Favourite Christmas scent?

The Noble Isle Fireside range, which has top notes of grapefruit and pink pepper, layered with cinnamon, cypress oil, ginger, oakmoss and vanilla – it's a real Christmas scent.

Favourite Christmas moment?

Looking at my twinkling Christmas tree – my idea of heaven!

Where will you be on New Year's Eve?

At a dinner party with friends in Oxfordshire.

New Year's Resolution?

To cook more. It's such a therapeutic thing to do – it's like yoga!

me – quince, plum and pear – and replanted them. A few months before Christmas I do all my preserving and jam-making. I make sloe gin, crab-apple and blackberry jelly, quince jam and plum chutney to go with pâtés, pork pies and cheese. I love foraging in the hedgerows – there are lots of hazelnuts, damsons and sloes in this area.

WHAT'S ON THE STOVE AT THIS TIME OF YEAR? My favourite dish for a festive celebration is roast goose with a homemade stuffing of roast plum, black pudding and walnut served with carrot and turnip mash.

WHAT'S YOUR IDEA OF A PERFECT CHRISTMAS? I am very close to my family, and we all come together at Christmas so that makes it a very special time. Sitting by the fire, with a glass of English sparkling wine, is my absolute favourite thing to do. This year the whole family is going skiing in Switzerland, as my sister lives there.

THE BEST NOBLE ISLE GIFT FOR CHRISTMAS? To The One I Love – a boxed set of Rhubarb Rhubarb! hand wash, bath and shower gel and diffuser. There's also a lovely embossed Christmas box exclusive to Fortnum & Mason.

📞 Noble Isle, 0800 157 7838, nobleisle.com.



What you smell.

What your
guests smell.



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Febreze truly eliminates odours and leaves a light Christmas scent.



Breathe Happy

PROJECTS, PLANS *and dreams*

ALL THE SOLUTIONS, ADVICE AND INSPIRATION YOU'LL
EVER NEED FOR THE PERFECT COUNTRY HOME



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Pamper yourself in
a beautiful bathroom

Page 94
Add sparkle with
gorgeous lighting

Page 97
Tune in with a
country-style radio »

Indulgent bathrooms for winter soaks

TAKE TIME OUT ON COLD NIGHTS WITH A PAMPERING SOAK IN A BUBBLE-FILLED TUB AND A MOOD-BOOSTING ATMOSPHERE. OUR COUNTRY-INSPIRED BATHROOM IDEAS WILL HELP YOU CREATE THE PERFECT SANCTUARY SPACE

1 Calming colours

'As private domains, bathrooms are spaces where you can afford to be a bit more indulgent with the decor,' says textile designer Vanessa Arbuthnott. 'Choose a wallpaper design that you can lie in the bath and admire, and introduce a co-ordinating fabric on a classic blind.' Cool colours, such as greens and blues, are considered naturally calming by colour psychologists, but this season's deliberately muted, sludgy hues have a look that is particularly easy on the eyes.

Wallpaper, Gypsy Garland, £52 a roll; **blind,** French Ticking, £46 m, both Vanessa Arbuthnott. **Bath,** similar from The Cast Iron Bath Company.





Atlantic panelled **bath**, £4,395; Empire **mixer**, £1,950; Atlantic **basin and cabinet** in Wenge, £1,750, Fired Earth.

2 Make the most of the view

'If you are in the fortunate position of having a bathroom that is not overlooked, locate your bath by a window so that you can lie back and let yourself drift away as you admire the view,' suggests Rob Whitaker, Creative Director at Fired Earth. 'Keeping the lighting in the room low – candlelight is ideal – will let you immerse yourself in the beauty of a starlit sky.'



Torridge **bath**, from £3,570; Classic bath and shower **mixer**, £1,434, Drummonds.

3 Warm to an open fire

'What could possibly be more luxurious than a leisurely soak in a bathroom with an open fire?' says Drummonds' Chairman, Drummond Shaw. Chesney's stocks a covetable array of marble fireplaces in a variety of styles or, if a chimney isn't accessible, consider a real flame bioethanol fireplace – Decoflame's range is eco-friendly, smoke-free and easy to install.

4 Sensual lighting

'Lighting is of paramount importance when seeking to create a serene bathing haven and we favour a combination of dramatic wall fixtures and twinkling spotlights, which bathe the bathroom in a sensual glow,' says Helen Bygraves, co-founder of Hill House Interiors. Dimmer controls make it easy to switch the lighting from bright and functional to softly diffused. Consider a digital system – try Rako – to programme your own settings for day and night. »



Bespoke **bathrooms** by Hill House Interiors start from £35,000.

Tip Before swapping a fitted bath for a freestanding design, check your flooring can accommodate any new plumbing and don't forget to add the cost of decorative waste pipes.



5 Salon style

Decorating your bathroom with furniture and upholstery more frequently found in a living room or bedroom is a growing trend among those seeking to set the mood for serious relaxation. Choose pieces with character that will help balance the cold surfaces of bathroom sanitaryware and enhance the look with statement wallpaper and a luxurious rug.

A similar Kohler **bathroom** would cost around £9,300.



Country best BATHING ACCESSORIES



SO FLUFFY

These luxurious towels are super soft and come in a range of rich, earthy colours.

• **Royal Turkish towels, col Pebble, £5-£45, Christy.**



EASY REACH

With support for a wine glass and a pull-up book rest, this will create spa-grade relaxation.

• **Bath rack, £28, John Lewis.**



UPLIFT THE SENSES

Enjoy the garden-inspired scent of this prettily packaged candle.

• **Lavender & Basil candle, £40, Liz Earle.**



Rimini **bath**, £1,056; bath **mixer**, £499; Carlton pedestal **basin**, £561; Tradition basin **taps**, £229, Aston Matthews.

6 Make room

Space is a luxury in any home but many people are now happily sacrificing an unused bedroom for a bigger bathroom. You can also gain space by moving doorways or stealing it from an adjacent hallway. 'One of the main benefits is that a larger room can take generously sized fittings that are a joy to use,' says Howard Birch, Managing Director, Aston Matthews.



Stanneus Bateau **bath**, £4,837; Zen bath **spout**, £902, William Holland.

7 Deep baths

The shoulder-enveloping fill of a French-inspired bateau bath is hard to beat when you need a really deep, indulgent soak. Handcrafted from pure copper with a tarnish-protecting tin finish, this rustic bateau also scores on the style front. 'Copper also has natural heat-retaining properties so you will be able to linger for longer without having to top up the hot water,' says William Holland's Sales Manager, Marc Howlett.

8 Spa effects

Recreate the luxury of a spa hotel at home by installing a whirlpool bath. The latest models have bespoke jets that can be aligned with key pressure points in your body for maximum massaging effect, plus integrated sound and even aromatherapy – try Teuco. Designer Justin Van Breda softens the modern technology with exposed beams and brickwork in his own country home.



Opalia built-in **whirlpool bath**, £4,200, Jacuzzi.

Country style need-to-know

- **CREATE A MOODBOARD** Starting with your dream tub, cut-out pictures from magazines, source fabric swatches and gather paint samples. Creating a collage of favourite looks will help to narrow down your preferred style and establish a cohesive scheme.
- **TALK TO EXPERTS** Specialist bathroom designers will be able to offer advice on building regulations, spatial planning and plumbing solutions, so book a meeting before you make any decisions.
- **THINK ABOUT HEATING** Radiators, underfloor heating and heated towel rails all need to be planned into your scheme to ensure you avoid cold floors and wet towels.
- **DON'T FORGET** to pamper all the senses while you bathe. Aromatherapy candles, ambient lighting and relaxing music will all do their bit to help you de-stress and unwind while you soak in a big tub of comforting hot water.

Cosy lights for glowing country rooms

CREATE A WARM, WELCOMING HAVEN WITH STATEMENT LIGHTS IN SHIMMERING METALLICS, RUSTIC PAINT FINISHES AND COUNTRY-INSPIRED SHAPES THAT LOOK STYLISH BY DAY AND BATHE YOUR ROOM IN SOFT, INTIMATE LIGHT AT NIGHT

1 Amazing antlers

In a cosy room packed with lots of creature comforts, including a roaring fire, nature-inspired antler lights complete the rustic feel. 'These light fittings are made from resin and hand painted, which gives them their unique colouring,' says Hollie Moreland, Brand Manager, David Hunt Lighting. 'Much like a Chesterfield sofa, they will never look out of place in a country home, but for a more contemporary look they are also available in black or white, or any paint colour you choose.'



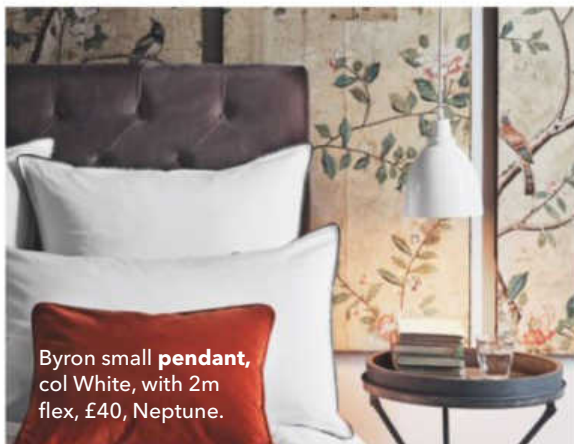
Antler bleached **pendant light** with bespoke silk shades, col Blackcurrant, £822; Antler bleached **lamp** with silk shade, col Black, £384, both David Hunt Lighting.



Painted turned-wood **lamp base**, col Dark Grey, £178; bespoke **shade**, similar from Tobias and the Angel.

2 Turned wood

'This elegant tall design is an exact copy of a 1920s turned-wood lamp base,' says Mark Betty, Lighting Specialist, Tobias and the Angel. 'It can be painted in one of nine paint shades, or your own colour, and we'll complete it with a bespoke shade in any shape, from any number of materials in myriad ways. Whether used to light a desk or bedside, it'll really lift the room's design and make it feel thoroughly decorated.'



Byron small **pendant**, col White, with 2m flex, £40, Neptune.

3 Direct source

Being tucked up in bed with a good book is oh-so appealing in the depths of winter. 'Pendant lights are the perfect mood setter for any room, especially when hung low over bedside tables,' says John Sims Hilditch, Managing Director, Neptune. 'The solid metal shade directs light downwards, so to avoid any glare, experiment with the height of the fitting before it is finally wired into place.'

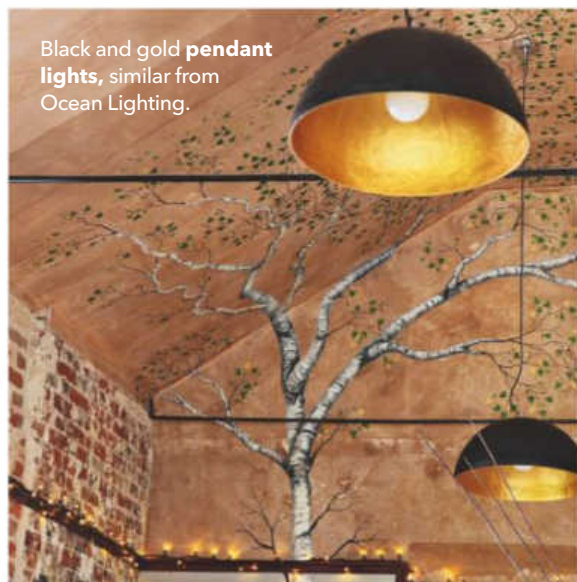
4 Industrial chic

'Based on classic box lights and lanterns usually seen flanking period properties, this contemporary take on a traditional floor lamp combines clean lines with a rustic simplicity,' says Peter Bowles, Managing Director, Davey Lighting. 'The Quad's glass panes, designed to showcase filament bulbs, lend a gentle industrial look, perfect with exposed brickwork and aged leather to create a cosy reading nook.'



Quad **floor light** in weathered brass with clear glass, around £1,126, Davey Lighting.

Tip Layer lighting by combining a number of different sources, from overhead fittings to low-level lamps. One-room or whole-house controls will link circuits for harmonious schemes at the touch of a screen.



Black and gold **pendant lights**, similar from Ocean Lighting.

5 Light show

No country home is complete without the magic worked by a pendant light. For a dramatic effect, select a simple dome shape with black exterior and shimmering gold interior. Whether hung as a single fitting centred over a dining table or in a row of three or five above an island unit in a kitchen, pendants work best when highlighting one area within an open-plan space.



Large glass Storm Shades **wall lights** with polished unlacquered brass fittings and Osh lampholders, £450 each, Hector Finch.

6 Adapted from tradition

'Some of the most beautiful vintage-style lights with exposed bulbs would normally be unsuitable for use in a bathroom due to safety regulations regarding the danger of them getting splashed,' says lighting expert Hector Finch. 'But fitted with an Osh enclosed lampholder capsule, this wall light and other lanterns, pendants and chandeliers can be used with more flexibility.'

7 Inspired combination

Bring the forest feel closer to home with a wow-factor chandelier decked out in a flurry of autumnal oak leaves. The rustic, country-inspired design ties in neatly with traditional leather seating, while an iconic chrome Anglepoise lamp designed in 1934 provides light for reading, and the glow from a contemporary hole-in-the-wall pebble fire completes the modern country room.



Oak leaf **chandelier**, similar from Brabin & Fitz. Original 1227 **desk lamp** in Bright Chrome, £210, Anglepoise.

Country style need-to-know

- **BE SAFETY CONSCIOUS** Before buying a vintage light fitting, always check that it has been rewired and carries a PAT test label. Find a good range of industrial lighting, sourced from factories, Victorian theatres and old schools at Skinflint Design. The company lovingly restores the light fittings, polishes them up (although some pieces retain a 'raw' original finish) and rewires them to comply with contemporary safety requirements.
- **CONSIDER DOUBLING UP** As a chandelier should be considered as a work of art for your home, it deserves a prominent position, ideally placed centrally within a room. Before choosing a hugely elaborate version, bear in mind that although it will appear to be the main source of light, a simple design will twinkle just as prettily if supplemented by downlighters and other light fittings.
- **CREATE AMBIENCE** Turn off that central light and aim for an oasis of calm in bedrooms, supplementing bedside lights with concealed lighting for an intimate effect. LED strips fitted on top of a wardrobe can direct light upwards to the wall above. Alternatively, fit downlighters to wash over the fronts of wardrobes.

Easy-listening radios with country-style chic

TREAT YOUR HOME TO AN INTERIOR-FRIENDLY DESIGN WITH GREAT SOUND QUALITY, CRYSTAL-CLEAR RECEPTION AND THE LATEST WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY



1

BEST FOR... Sound quality **Ruark, £199**

Featuring Osborne & Little's pale aqua and grey Melo print, the multi award-winning R1 radio (H17xW13xD13.5cm) - also in walnut, black and white - sounds so much better than its size suggests, making it ideal for a study or open-plan kitchen. It's effortlessly easy to use and features DAB/FM, Bluetooth, dual alarms, USB charging port and 20 preset stations.



2

BEST FOR... Inside and out **Pure, £149.99**

With the compact Evoke D2 Mio Sanderson Edition (shown in Dandelion Clocks) you can enjoy a radio that will slip seamlessly into your home or garden. It features Bluetooth for wireless streaming and 20 preset stations plus an optional battery pack (£17.99) giving up to 20 hours of use outside. Measures H18xW11.5xD12cm.



3

BEST FOR... Crystal-clear reception **Revo, £279.99**

It's expensive, but as well as having DAB/FM and Bluetooth, the Revo SuperConnect (H18xW27xD12cm) can connect to your home broadband and play internet radio stations. This gives you access to more than 16,000 global stations and is great if you have poor radio reception. It also has eight preset stations, RCA input, alarm and remote control.



4

BEST FOR... Value for money **View Quest, £89.99**

Don't let the retro looks fool you, the Christie (H21.5xW13.5xD12.6cm) is packed with features including DAB/FM, Bluetooth, NFC, 30 preset stations, an alarm and 3.5mm stereo connector. It can be battery powered and play music wirelessly. Swivel the LCD control panel to allow the radio to sit vertically or horizontally.



5

BEST FOR... Your bedside table **Tivoli Audio, £199**

If you prefer a clock radio without a bright digital display, the Model Three (H11.43x W21.27xD13.34cm) with dual alarm is just the thing. The traditional design, shown in cherry/metallic taupe, is available in a range of colours and, while it doesn't have DAB digital radio, you can listen to anything from the web via Bluetooth.

Country style need-to-know

- **TUNE INTO DIGITAL** Most of the UK can now receive DAB digital radio broadcasts, but in some places reception is patchy. Check your postcode at ukdigitalradio.com.
- **BREAK THE BUDGET** You can pick up a simple DAB radio for as little as £25, but we think it's worth spending more to benefit from the best limited-edition looks, extra features such as battery pack and bright LCD display and, most important of all, sound quality.
- **GO WIRELESS** It's worth investing in a Bluetooth radio. This allows you to wirelessly play music (with a range of about 10m) stored on your smartphone, from online services such as Spotify or the BBC iPlayer.
- **LOOK OUT FOR BATTERY OPTIONS** Built-in batteries allow you to listen anywhere. A lithium-ion battery can last all day and is less wasteful than replacing disposable designs. Some radios can even use the built-in battery to charge your mobile phone.

THIS MONTH'S OFFERS FROM COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

Plants for Christmas colour

Treat yourself or a friend to beautiful flowers this winter

Camellia japonica 'Christmas Beauty'
* Buy 1 *Camellia japonica*
'Christmas Beauty' for £22 or
2 for £32 - **SAVE £12.**

* Flowering from November to March, this camellia has cerise-red blooms with golden sepals and dark green evergreen foliage. It is ideal for containers or by a doorway where the light peony-like fragrance can be enjoyed. Height and spread, 3m x 180cm in 10 years.

Supplied in full bud in garden-ready 12cm pots.

NEW Tri-coloured Christmas cactus
* Buy 1 **NEW Tri-coloured Christmas cactus** for £14, or
buy 3 for £21 - **half price, SAVE £21.**

* We're offering a new variety of Christmas cactus that really has it all. With glossy evergreen foliage, this succulent bursts into flower in late November with a mass of pretty blooms in three shades of pink. Eventual height and spread, 20-40cm.

Supplied in 9cm pots.

Enjoy
flowers on
Christmas
Day!



NEW!

All plants
despatched in
14 days, plus
FREE delivery
worth £5.99

How to order

Online at hayloftplants.co.uk/ROCH15
or call 01386 426245, quoting ROCH15-48

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All plants will be despatched in 14 days at the perfect time to plant and enjoy - unless stated otherwise. Online orders will receive an order acknowledgement via email with approximate delivery date. Offer closes 6 January 2016. Your contract of goods is with Hayloft Plants, a company wholly independent of Country Homes & Interiors, published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.

Half-price wine offer

Buy 12 bottles for £59.88 plus p&p and save 50%

Country Homes & Interiors, in association with Virgin Wines, is offering readers a selection of 12 delicious boutique wines direct from small family-owned vineyards across the world.

* The case includes some of the best wines we have to offer, with silky-smooth, decade-aged Spanish Rioja, delightfully crisp Aussie Sauvignon Blanc, and much more. Also available as an all-red or all-white selection.

* Plus, we're including a bottle of bubbly Prosecco and two Dartington Crystal champagne flutes **FREE** (normally £25.99).

* With wines worth up to £12.99 a bottle, this case normally sells for more than £120, but is exclusively yours for only £59.88 plus p&p - just £4.99 a bottle.

* Limited to one promotional case per customer on a first-come, first-served basis - new customers only.

Plus **FREE**
fizz and
flutes!



How to order

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or call 0843 224 1001, quoting VA1103

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Shaped to perfection

THE SIMPLE BEAUTY OF AMANDA MEHIGAN'S GARDEN IS THROWN INTO SHARP RELIEF ON A FROSTY NEW YEAR MORNING

Courtyard garden

Without the froth of summer planting, the symmetry and crisp edges of the box parterre come into their own. >>



Bog garden The stream that feeds the icy pond meanders past a pretty summerhouse.



AT HOME WITH...

Owners Simon and Amanda Mehigan, who live here with their cat Honor and a flock of laying hens.

House Tudor manor house with later 18th-century and Victorian additions. It served for a time as rectory to the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin across the road.

Garden Almost five acres of acidic greensand with an avenue of clipped yew and hornbeam, pond and bog garden, formal vegetable garden, orchards and topiary, snowdrops and other early bulbs.

An overgrown conifer plantation covering almost half of a five-acre garden would be enough to put off most people, however historic the house and charming the village, but not Amanda and Simon Mehigan. 'We weren't daunted, though I think that was due to our ignorance as much as anything,' says Amanda as she recalls their first sight of the garden of the Old Rectory in Netherbury, Dorset, 20 years ago.

A year after the couple moved into their new home, timber contractors felled and stripped the trees on site, removing the logs and leaving behind huge mounds of wet brushwood, which was impossible to burn. 'In the end the landscaper dug a big hole with a digger to bury most of it, and piled the rest up at the far end of the garden to make a viewing mound,' says Amanda.

With the conifers gone, the basic layout of the garden was sketched out, determined by the character and lie of the ground. 'We had a small valley with a long central path, one side of which was very wet, so we got the digger driver to exaggerate and widen the path and extend it the entire length of the garden.' An existing pond was made larger and a stream was dug, into which the wet ground could drain, an area which subsequently became a natural bog garden and one of the garden's finest features.

Keen on formality and strong architectural shapes in a garden, Simon planted the entire 180-metre central axis with a formal avenue, including yew pyramids, a line of fastigate hornbeams and a pair of solid hornbeam hedges leading to a beech 'house' »



Drifts of bulbs break through the earth at the foot of a gnarled ginkgo tree.



Courtyard garden
Rose arches and box spirals flank a decorative cobbled pathway.

What we love most about this garden...

‘Going around looking out for the early bulbs poking their noses up through the frosty ground and, of course, the first flowers’



Formal garden
Clipped topiary shapes and a tall yew hedge create vistas in every direction.





Kitchen garden
The Church of St Mary the Virgin can be seen beyond the frosted vegetable beds.

Modern Country Classic

Using symmetry

Any country plot - even cottage-style - can benefit from a balanced design.

Need to know...

- Use a more relaxed approach to symmetry in a country garden, balancing slightly different forms across a central axis for instance.
- Strongly symmetrical elements in a garden should relate closely to the house at its centre.
 - Remember that nature is not 'perfect', so allow for growth.
 - Use pairs of obelisks to create symmetry within borders - these can be moved to change the look of an area, and still look good in winter.
 - Use symmetry to direct the eye towards a focal point.
- Use symmetrical patterns on paths or as a knot garden to be seen from first-floor rooms of the house.

at the far end. Now mature, the avenue is the dominant feature during winter, framing views across the garden.

The house is closely framed by evergreen structure, too: the front drive surrounded by clipped holm oaks and hollies that stand in panelled pews of box; the formal courtyard at the back of the house a mix of Portugal laurel umbrellas in box parterres. On the slope above the north side of the house a crenellated yew walk leads towards the church tower of St Mary the Virgin and the vegetable garden, simply fenced with chicken wire between finial-topped posts, a delicate pencil sketch in winter of sharply edged beds, glass cloches, rhubarb forcers and metal obelisks.

Though the garden is formal in structure, nature washes freely in and out, with grassy slopes of naturalised bulbs and wild flowers: snowdrops and cyclamen in winter; primroses, narcissi, fritillaries and *Tulipa sprengeri* in spring; red campion, ox-eye daisies, foxgloves and cow parsley among the long grasses of summer.

Having been used to a small cottage garden, Amanda found the move to five acres a difficult one. 'I began by planting close to the house and drew a plan of the beds and paths in the courtyard at the back of the house. At first, I used cottage garden favourites like lavender, peonies, foxgloves and roses, creating a tapestry effect, but then started to look at flowering trees such as magnolias and *Cornus kousa*, which do well in damp areas. That helped me see things on a larger scale.' The garden now has many ornamental trees, including later-flowering magnolias such as *Magnolia* »



What makes this garden so special...
'The way it reflects our personalities'

The avenue Neatly clipped pyramids of yew appear to march through the central axis of the garden in pairs, their reflections in the pond dark against the grey winter sky.



A crenellated yew hedge leads the eye towards a birdbath at the point where two grass paths cross.

sieboldii, and a 'thornery' with over 30 varieties of hawthorn.

In January and February the mossy grass below the oak in the corner of the front garden is spangled with lilac and purple naturalised *Crocus tommasinianus* and pink *Cyclamen coum*, while sloping ground behind the house is coloured with hellebores, snowdrops, more cyclamen and *Iris reticulata*. The lie of the land here is a bonus as it gives the opportunity to see these small flowers at eye level. 'I became interested in snowdrops because they appear in the depths of winter and I've built up quite a collection now, though the ones I prefer are those that bulk up well and spread, such as *Galanthus 'Atkinsii'* and *G. 'S. Arnott'*,' says Amanda.

Winter is a busy time in the garden, perhaps more so than summer. 'From autumn we're constantly clearing leaves off beds and borders so that the bulbs can make their way up through the soil in spring and all the dead herbaceous material gets cut down, too,' says Amanda. Those fallen leaves are an ideal resource and go to make leaf mould, a wonderful soil conditioner that will be applied as a thick mulch when well rotted.

In the future, the couple are keen to introduce more bulbs that will naturalise and spread in the garden, especially the vivid red *Tulipa sprengeri*, which, appropriately enough, bursts into flame-like flower beneath the avenue of scarlet oaks in May; a warming thought on a cold winter's morning.

📞 The Old Rectory, Netherbury, Beaminster, Dorset DT6 5NB. Open for the National Gardens Scheme in 2016. See ngs.org.uk for dates.



ON OUR DOORSTEP...

Visit... 'Forde Abbey (01460 220231, fordeabbey.co.uk) in Chard, with its wonderful bog garden, walled vegetable garden and drifts of naturalised crocus in March.'

Shop at... 'Washingpool Farm Shop (01308 459549, washingpool.co.uk) in North Allington, with a huge range of produce from over 100 local suppliers.'

Go for a meal at... 'Brassica (01308 538100, brassicarestaurant.co.uk) in Beaminster, where chef Cass Titcombe is cooking delicious food. Next door, there's also a Brassica homewares shop.'



Amanda's frosty favourites

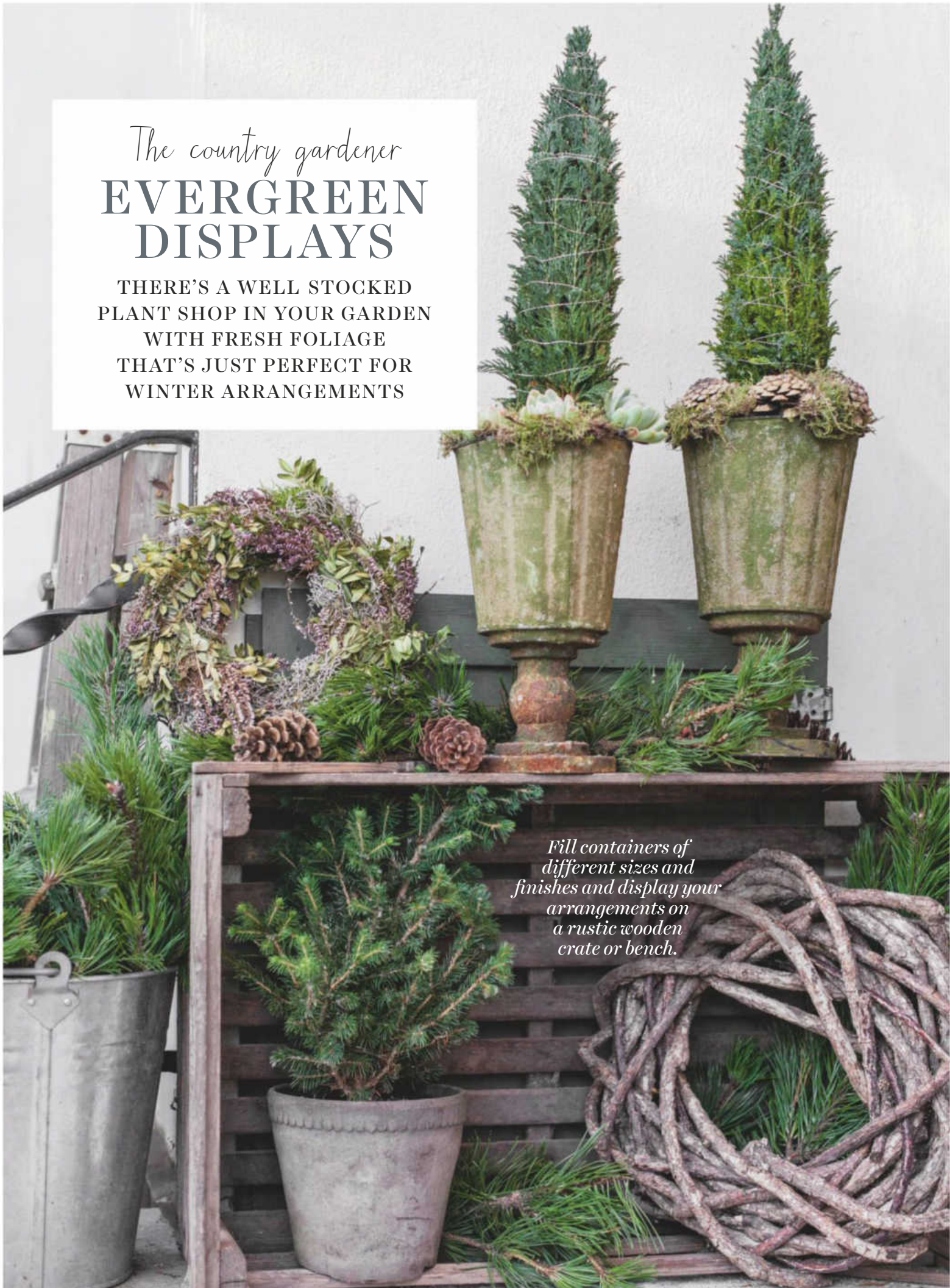
- 1 *Helleborus x hybridus* range from pure white to deep purply black.
- 2 *Iris reticulata* have bright blue flowers with a splash of yellow on the fall.
- 3 *Crocus tommasinianus* are delicate and look best naturalised in grass.
- 4 Box, the classic evergreen of a formal garden, can be clipped into any shape.
- 5 *Iris unguicularis* rises from a mesh of grassy leaves in the depths of winter.
- 6 Variegated holly reflects light very well in the dark months.
- 7 *Galanthus elwesii* var. *monostictus* is early flowering with broad leaves.
- 8 *Cyclamen coum* has charming flowers of swept-back petals.

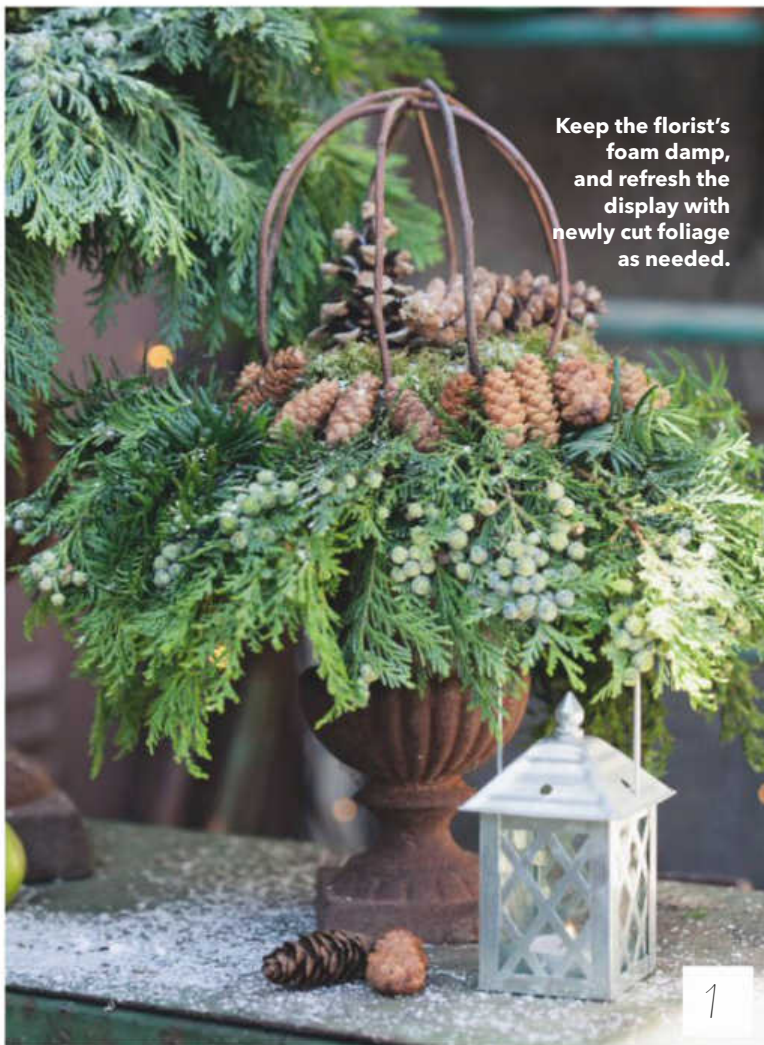


The country gardener
**EVERGREEN
DISPLAYS**

THERE'S A WELL STOCKED
PLANT SHOP IN YOUR GARDEN
WITH FRESH FOLIAGE
THAT'S JUST PERFECT FOR
WINTER ARRANGEMENTS

*Fill containers of
different sizes and
finishes and display your
arrangements on
a rustic wooden
crate or bench.*





Keep the florist's foam damp, and refresh the display with newly cut foliage as needed.

1



If you don't have sage, use other evergreen aromatic herbs, such as bay leaves or rosemary sprigs, instead.

2



3

Wooden containers are the perfect choice for a country garden. An old trug or apple box would look just as pretty.

1 ADD THE CROWNING GLORY

A rusted urn contrasts with blue-green conifer sprigs and fruit, and echoes the pine cones beautifully. This display uses florist's foam generously covered with cypress to form a base – juniper would work just as well. Four lengths of hazel have been bent over to make a crown that's roughly the same height as the bowl of the urn, and finished with cones. Use as a table centrepiece, arrange a pair of urns at the foot of steps or place along a sheltered wall.

2 GIVE A WARM WELCOME

Evergreen foliage attached to a wire ring or a circle of florist's foam makes an attractive winter wreath. Add dried orange slices and ivy flowers, as well as highly scented daphne and silvery sage leaves, to a fresh green mossy base and hang up for all to enjoy.

3 CHOOSE WEATHERED WOOD

An old wooden crate is given a new lease of life with winter blooms and foliage in a cool, frosty palette of lime greens and creamy whites. Here, pots of white hellebores (Christmas roses) and vibrant heather combine well with variegated euonymus, dotted with shiny green crab apples and pine cones. The box may be lined with plastic to protect it, allowing for drainage from the pots. »



If corkscrew hazel is hard to come by, add height and drama with bare stems of dogwood in vivid shades of yellow or red.

4



Tricks of the trade

When gathering foliage from your garden, remember you are pruning your plants. Take care where you make cuts, so you don't spoil the look of them come spring.

Evergreens
lonicera, hebe or
privet could look
just as attractive as
box in this wreath.

5



6

These conifers have been gently bound with a spiral of fine metallic thread. This serves to keep their shape uniform and also brings a festive note to the garden.

4 TRY A NEW TWIST

Branches of corkscrew hazel, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', take a simple evergreen display to a new level. Here, they are arranged around three echeverias – grey-green succulents with a blush of pink at their tips – planted at the centre of a large container that has been edged with sprigs of dark green box.

5 MIX UP THE INGREDIENTS

Once you have covered your wreath ring thoroughly with evergreen foliage – in this case, box clippings – you can be creative with whatever else you decide to add. This beautiful wreath has a purple theme, provided by small bunches of heather, a stem of pussy willow and, surprisingly, three perfect bulbs of garlic.

6 USE SALVAGED URNS

Punctuating a bare winter garden, dwarf conifers grown in tall weathered urns make ideal focal points. They can be spruced up by adding moss, succulents, plump pine cones and even frosted baubles around the base of the tree. Aged containers blend more naturally into their surroundings – scour reclamation yards and garden statuary specialists for perfect pieces.

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With so much to do in such a limited time at Christmas, The White Company can help to make the festivities go as smoothly as possible. This year's collection is full of exciting new products, so that present buying and styling your home is a pleasure. From quick and simple decorating ideas to gorgeous gifts for everyone on your list, from easy entertaining tips to planning your wardrobe, there's so much to inspire and make your celebrations magical.

All the important little details are taken care of, including gift vouchers for those who are hard to buy for and gorgeous gift boxes to ensure every present is extra special. Plus, should you choose to buy online, you can be assured of a quick, fuss-free delivery.

How to claim your discount

For a limited time period, Country Homes & Interiors readers can enjoy a special **20% off, plus free delivery**. Visit thewhitecompany.com and enter the code AH613 at the checkout, or call 020 3758 9222, quoting the code AH613.

Alternatively, show this page in store. To find your nearest branch, visit thewhitecompany.com/stores.



Lurex Stripe jumper, £89. Cross Weave Detail scarf, £69.



Winter Botanical candles, Large, £35; Pillar, £25; Ultimate Indulgence, £85.

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TERMS AND CONDITIONS For full terms and conditions please see www.thewhitecompany.com/help/terms. Offer is valid on full-priced items only. Offer ends on 6 January 2016.



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From the makers of



10 WAYS TO

Make life lovely

FASHION, WELLBEING, ECO, PETS, TRAVEL AND OTHER NICE THINGS

1 Capture a 'New Year' moment in time

Create a community time capsule together with your neighbours to show future residents what village life was like in 2016...

Organise a group meeting and invite locals to share ideas on what to include. **Suggest things that reflect everyday life**, such as coins, maps, newspapers and photographs – nothing perishable. A group prediction of what the future will be like when the capsule is opened is

also a good idea.

Set a date to meet and ask everyone to bring something along. **Pack small objects and papers** individually into food storage bags, then place everything in a sturdy, acid-free container. Label with the details of those who have contributed and a date to be opened – in 50 years is about right. **Decide where to store it**, such as the community hall, library or church, and hold a 'sealing ceremony' to celebrate!

2 KNIT A PULLOVER FOR YOUR POOCH

From an old barn on the Weald of Kent, Debbie Humphreys runs her country business Redhound for Dogs, designing and making stylish knitted jumpers for chilly canines. She shares easy-to-follow patterns in her book *Dogs in Jumpers* (£14.99, Pavilion Books), each accompanied by colourway suggestions, expert advice and a handy measurement guide.



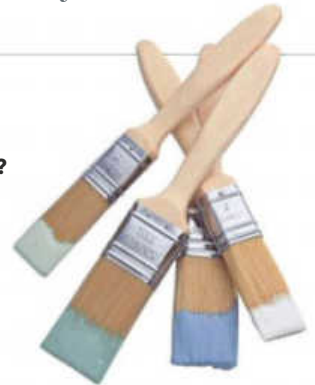
Asymmetric cape, col Taupe, £199, Celtic & Co.

3 Cosy up in a cape

Wrap up your winter wardrobe with the cover-up of the moment; made from a luxurious cashmere blend, this elegant cape has a fur-lined collar to ensure you look chic while staying snug throughout the chilly season.

4 DECORATE WITH ECO-FRIENDLY PAINT
Planning a spot of painting?

We love the Claypaint range from Earthborn. The paint is 100% free from oils and acrylics, meaning no nasty emissions – better for you, your home and the environment, too. Choose from 72 gorgeous shades, including many classic country hues, £35 for 2.5L. »





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5

Treat ills and chills
the natural way

SUFFERING FROM MINOR WINTER AILMENTS?
TRY SOME OF THESE SOOTHING HOME REMEDIES
TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER NATURALLY

When a sore throat strikes, add a sprinkle of cayenne pepper to honey, lemon and boiling water for a soothing drink.

Need to cool down? Apple cider vinegar speeds up heat loss. Mix 1 cup with 2 cups



of water in a bowl, dip in a cloth and apply to the arms, legs and body.

Ward off seasonally induced indigestion with an inch of fresh ginger and a pinch of salt, ground up and taken with warm water before any meal.

Ease a party-induced headache, add 5-7 drops of peppermint oil to ice water and apply a compress to the forehead for 10 minutes.

No dentist open? Grind up dried cloves and add water for a numbing paste. Pack around the gum for 5-10 minutes before rinsing.

6

Get polished for
the party season

**CHOOSE AN ALL-NATURAL NAIL VARNISH
IN A SUMPTUOUS BERRY SHADE...**

- A range of show-stopping shades enriched with bamboo oil for healthier, hydrated nails. Carmine Red, £10.90 for 8ml, Zao.
- Add sparkle with this vegan polish, naturally coloured and infused with plant essence. Bespoke, £9.75 for 15ml, SpaRitual.
- This formula gives a high-gloss finish that's long-lasting and toxin-free. Merlot Shimmer, £11.50 for 11ml, The Organic Pharmacy.



7

Buy British
PLANKBRIDGE HUTMAKERS

In 2000, Richard Lee and his wife Jane Dennison came across an ancient shepherd's hut near their Dorset home. Richard was inspired by the traditional craftsmanship and rural heritage and was motivated to build a reproduction model on a set of old wheels. One thing led to another and Plankbridge Hutmakers was born! Now Richard and his talented team work with customers to create bespoke huts, from guest rooms to writers' retreats, complete with English oak joinery and a Farrow & Ball painted interior. Prices start from £11,246. Visit plankbridge.com.

8

Say thank you beautifully

Based in the heart of Bath, stationer Meticulous Ink rekindles the art of putting pen to paper with British-made correspondence cards, printed using traditional letterpress techniques with beautiful

illustrations.

Prices from £3.95. Visit meticulousink.com.



9

LOG ONTO A 'HAPPY' DIARY

Start the New Year as you mean to go on by recording feel-good moments with the *Happiness* app (£2.99, Good to Hear). As well as helping you keep track of positive decisions and actions during the day, it encourages you to keep making/doing them, too! »

10 Celebrate with a crowd

FROM NEW YEAR GATHERINGS TO WEDDINGS AND PARTIES, ENJOY AN EXTRA-SPECIAL TIME AT ONE OF THESE BEAUTIFUL LOCATIONS



DEWSALL COURT, HEREFORDSHIRE

We love it because...

Guests get a taste of the Downton life at this 17th-century country house where each stay is tailor made so you can kick back and fill your time with exciting challenges and adventures! Activities offered include archery, foraging, yoga or cookery lessons arranged at your request. If that sounds like hard work, there are always beauty and massage treatments!

What is the accommodation like?

Traditional country style abounds with grand rooms filled with sumptuous fabrics, linens, fresh flowers and antiques. Outside there are 15 acres to explore including Wainhouse barn with its woodburning stove

and medieval candle chandeliers.

And the food? Private chefs and catering can be arranged. Try formal dining, a casual lunch or request a campfire for a stargazing feast. Menus feature the best of local and seasonal produce for tasty meals and tempting treats.

How much? From £2,860 a night for exclusive use. Sleeps up to 23 in 10 bedrooms.

Dewsall Court, 01432 355058, dewsalt.com.



FOXHILL MANOR, WORCESTERSHIRE

We love it because...

Its day job is a private house hotel, but you can hire this beautiful building, set on the 400-acre Farncombe Estate.

What is the accommodation like?

Bedrooms are beautifully decorated and the house boasts details such as Cotswold mullion windows.

And the food? The motto is 'whatever you fancy, wherever you fancy it'. So enjoy a meal in the dining room, cinema, your bedroom or even in



the kitchen with the chef!

How much? From £295 for a room including breakfast, snacks, drinks and use of the spa. From £6,000 a night for exclusive hire. Sleeps up to 16 in eight bedrooms.

Foxhill Manor, 01386 852711, foxhillmanor.com.

CHAPEL HOUSE, CORNWALL

We love it because...

This boutique townhouse in the port of Penzance is perfect for bracing coastal walks as well as a spot of shopping.

What is the accommodation like?

Sympathetically restored, the interior takes its lead from the sea with a palette of soft greys, greens and blues. There are six super-stylish bedrooms with sea views and en-suite bathrooms feature monsoon showers and deep bath tubs.

And the food? Owner Susan Stuart can

rustle up evening meals on request. Catering for large groups can also be arranged.

How much? From £150 for a room including breakfast. Exclusive hire from £1,000 a night with breakfast. Sleeps up to 12 in six bedrooms.

Chapel House, 01736 362024, chapelhousepz.co.uk.



THIS MONTH'S OFFERS FROM COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

8 days
from £789
per person



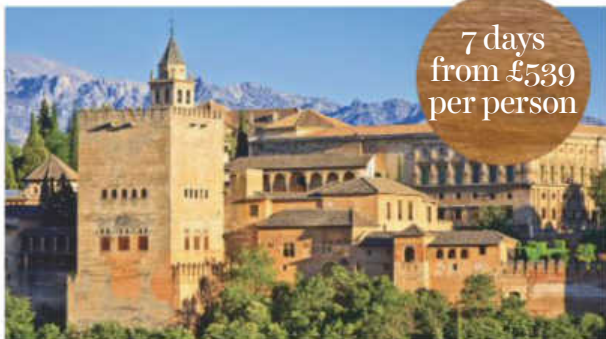
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Experience the historic cities of Rome (above), Florence, Siena and Assisi on our escorted tour.

Selected departures from April to October 2016.

The price includes: Return flights to Rome from Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted, Luton, Bristol, East Midlands, Leeds/Bradford, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Newcastle, Manchester or Dublin * Seven nights in 4-star hotels with breakfast and four evening meals * Guided tours of historic Rome and medieval Siena * Guided tour of Florence, including a timed visit to the Uffizi * Guided tour of Arezzo and visit to Assisi, birthplace of St Francis * Discover Tuscany's stunning countryside * Escorted by an experienced tour manager.

7 days
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Classical Spain

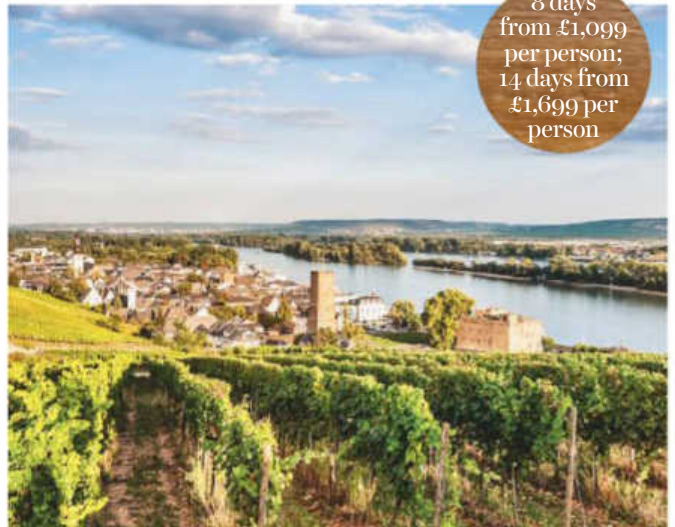
Join our escorted tour to explore the treasures of Seville, Granada (above) and Cordoba.

Selected departures from March to November 2016.

The price includes: Return flights to Malaga from Gatwick, Bristol, East Midlands, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Leeds/Bradford, Birmingham, Luton, Manchester, Newcastle, Exeter or Southampton * Six nights in hand-picked 3- and 4-star hotels with breakfast, staying in Seville, Granada and Mijas

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snowy outside...

Cheese and beer
fondue with a
dash of whisky »





Goulash soup

Venison fillets and
brandy sauce »



CHEESE AND BEER FONDUE WITH A DASH OF WHISKY

Ideally, use Gruyère with Vacherin Fribourgeois, a semi-hard cheese with a nutty flavour.

SERVES 6-8

1 fat garlic clove, halved

2 tsp cornflour

400ml hoppy lager beer

800g grated mixture of 2 or 3 Swiss or French

Alpine cheeses, such as Gruyère or Comté, Vacherin Fribourgeois, good-quality Emmental and Beaufort

1-2 tsp whisky

1 large loaf of slightly stale white country bread, cut into cubes

Pickles and charcuterie, to serve

1 Rub the garlic all over the inside of a fondue pot. Mix the cornflour with a little of the beer to make a smooth paste, then add this and the rest of the beer to the pot.

2 Place the pot over a low heat, add the cheese and stir until it is melted and steaming, but not boiling. If it is too thick, you can add a little more beer. Add the whisky then transfer the pot to the fondue stand and light the burner.

3 Dip the bread cubes into the melting cheese and eat with pickles and charcuterie.

GOULASH SOUP

This Hungarian dish with its kick of paprika and rich soured cream makes a hearty meal on a cold day.

SERVES 6

Olive oil for frying

100g smoked streaky bacon, finely chopped

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 heaped tbsp plain flour

1kg braising steak or beef shin, cut into 2.5cm chunks

2 large onions, thinly sliced

2 red peppers, deseeded and sliced

3 garlic cloves, crushed

5 juniper berries, crushed

2 bay leaves

1 tbsp sweet smoked paprika

½ tbsp hot paprika

2 tsp caraway seeds

2 tbsp tomato purée

1 tbsp red wine vinegar

1.2L beef stock

300g waxy potatoes, cut into chunks

2 beetroots, cut into chunks

Freshly chopped parsley and soured cream, to serve

1 Heat a good layer of olive oil in a flameproof casserole or large saucepan and fry the bacon over a medium heat until starting to colour. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

2 Season the flour well and dust the beef. Then using the same pan, brown the beef in batches over a high heat, adding more oil if necessary. Remove and set aside with the bacon.

3 Add a little more oil to the pan and add the onions and peppers. Fry for 10 minutes until softened and the onions start to colour. Add the garlic, juniper berries, bay leaves and spices, and fry for a few minutes before adding the tomato purée, vinegar and stock.

4 Return the beef and bacon to the pan and season well. Bring to a simmer, then cover with a lid and cook for 2-2½ hours, until the beef is starting to become tender.

5 Add the potatoes and beetroot to the pan and simmer, with the lid off, until the vegetables are tender.

6 Stir in the parsley and serve in large warmed bowls with generous dollops of soured cream.

VENISON FILLETS AND BRANDY SAUCE

In this impressive dish, the venison should be cooked so that it is still lovely and pink inside.

SERVES 4

Olive oil for frying and coating

50g unsalted butter

2 shallots, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

150g button mushrooms, sliced

4 tbsp brandy

100ml beef stock

75ml double cream

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

800g venison fillet

1 tbsp freshly chopped tarragon »

Glühwein »



Swiss chard
gratin



1 Heat the oven to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas 6. Heat a little oil and half the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the shallots for 10 minutes until softened.

2 Add the garlic and mushrooms and fry for 5 minutes until the mushrooms are golden brown. Add the brandy and bubble away until reduced by half. Pour in the beef stock and cream, and simmer for 5 minutes.

3 Season the venison fillet. Heat an ovenproof frying pan over a high heat with a little oil. Sear the fillet all over until browned. Add the remaining butter to the pan and spoon over the top of the fillet.

4 Transfer to the oven for 5-6 minutes. Set aside to rest, loosely covered in foil.

5 Add the tarragon to the sauce and warm through. Serve with the venison.

GLUHWEIN

Pass round glasses of steaming, spicy glühwein and let the celebrations commence!

SERVES 6-8

1 bottle full-bodied red wine

100ml brandy

1 cinnamon stick

3 cloves

1 star anise

1 orange, sliced

1 lemon, sliced

50-75g caster sugar, to serve

Place all the ingredients in a large pan with 250ml water. Heat gently until the sugar dissolves, then serve the glühwein ladled into mugs or glasses.

SWISS CHARD GRATIN

This rich gratin is delicious as a side course or a meal in itself with a little added bacon.

SERVES 6

800g Swiss chard

50g butter

75g plain flour

200ml crème fraîche

300ml double cream

Freshly grated nutmeg

Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

50g fresh breadcrumbs

Finely grated zest of 1 lemon, plus a good squeeze of juice, to serve

50g grated Gruyère cheese

1 tbsp olive oil

1 Preheat the grill to medium. Bring a pan of water to the boil and blanch the chard for 2-3 minutes, then drain and refresh under cold running water. Squeeze out as much of the water as possible and set aside.

2 Melt the butter in a pan, add the flour and cook for 1-2 minutes. Stir in the crème fraîche, cream and a good grating of nutmeg. Simmer for 2-3 minutes. Season.

3 Mix the breadcrumbs with the lemon zest, cheese and olive oil.

4 Mix the chard and the sauce together. Spoon the chard into a large ovenproof dish. Sprinkle with the breadcrumb mixture, then place the dish under the grill for a couple of minutes until golden brown and bubbling.

(If you like, you can mix the sauce with the chard and leave until ready to cook. Heat through in a medium oven for 5-10 minutes before browning under the grill.) Serve with a squeeze of lemon juice. »

Linzertorte



Gâteau de Savoie »



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LINZERTORTE

With delightfully crumbly pastry and fruity jam filling, this torte is perfect after a wintry outing.

SERVES 10-12

150g mixed finely ground hazelnuts and almonds
275g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
1 tsp ground mixed spice
½ tsp fine sea salt
225g cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
85g icing sugar
2 egg yolks, plus 1 egg yolk, beaten with a little water, to glaze
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon, plus a squeeze of juice
3 tbsp dry breadcrumbs
10 tbsp each of redcurrant jelly and raspberry jam

1 Grease a 23cm fluted, loose-bottomed tart pan. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Mix the ground nuts, flour, mixed spice and salt in a bowl. Add the butter and rub in until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the icing sugar, stir well, then quickly mix in the 2 egg yolks, lemon zest and juice, so the mixture starts to come together.

2 Knead dough briefly on a lightly floured surface. Remove one-third and shape into a disc, wrap in clingfilm and refrigerate for 10 minutes.

3 Roll out remaining dough into a circle large enough to line the tart pan. You may need to patch holes as the dough is very crumbly. Chill the base and any pastry scraps for 10 minutes.

4 Bake the base for 10-15 minutes, until just beginning to colour, then set aside to cool. Meanwhile, roll out remaining dough and scraps between 2 sheets of parchment into a circle about 25cm, then chill for 20 minutes.

5 Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the cooled base of the torte. Mix jelly and jam together, then spoon on top and spread in an even layer.

6 Cut the remaining pastry circle into strips, about 2cm wide, across the diagonal, and make a lattice pattern on the tart.

7 Brush the pastry with the egg yolk glaze, then bake for 45-50 minutes until golden. Allow to cool for 10 minutes then remove from the pan.

GATEAU DE SAVOIE

This classic Alpine cake is feather light with a hint of citrus, and is delicious with cherries and cream.

SERVES 10-12

Butter for greasing
200g icing sugar, plus extra for dusting
6 large eggs, separated
1 tsp pure vanilla extract
60ml boiling water
¼ tsp cream of tartar
175g plain flour
100g chopped mixed peel
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
1 jar of cherries in kirsch, and whipped cream, to serve

1 Grease a 25cm bundt pan with butter and dust with icing sugar. Preheat the oven to 150°C/Fan 130°C/Gas 2. Whisk the egg yolks, vanilla extract and icing sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer or with an electric hand whisk, until very thick, creamy and pale. As you whisk, very slowly dribble in the boiling water, a tiny bit at a time. Once all the water is added, keep whisking until you have a thick, glossy mixture that holds its shape.

2 In a clean bowl, whisk the egg whites with the cream of tartar until they form stiff peaks.

3 Sift the flour over the egg yolk mixture, using a metal spoon to fold it in as you go. Fold in the peel and lemon zest. Mix a large dollop of the egg white into the mixture to loosen it a little, then carefully fold in the rest, being very careful not to knock out too much air.

4 Scrape the mixture into the pan and bake in the oven for 50-60 minutes, until golden and a skewer pushed into the centre comes away clean. Turn the cake out onto a wire rack to cool completely.

5 Dust with icing sugar and serve with the kirsch-soaked cherries and lots of cream.



Recipes from *Winter Cabin Cooking* by Lizzie Kamenetzky, with photographs by Nassima Rothacker (Ryland Peters & Small, £19.99).

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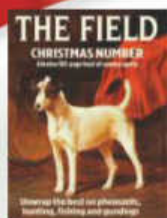
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‘OUR STAMPS TRANSFORM STATIONERY INTO WORKS OF ART’

Stamp makers Sasha and Jon Dorey

Sasha and Jon Dorey came up with the idea for a business involving wooden stamps when travelling in India in the 1990s. ‘We saw these wooden stamps being used for fabric printing and had a light-bulb moment,’ says Sasha.

On their return, they gave up their jobs in London – Sasha worked for a special-effects company and Jon was an engineer – and moved to Sasha’s home county of Dorset to set up a business. ‘It was a combination of my creative streak and Jon’s ability to make things!’ says Sasha.

Stencilling in home interiors was all the rage at the time, and Sasha and Jon thought stamping would be easier for the home decorator, so in 1992 they set up The English Stamp Company (they liked the simple and self-explanatory name) as an alternative to stencilling.

Sasha and Jon bought a quarryman’s cottage on the Isle of Purbeck, and while Sasha designed the stamps, Jon made the designs and added beautiful hardwood handles – the designs are made from

rubber while the handles are in sustainable beech wood. ‘Osborne & Little’s star wallpaper was very popular at the time, so this inspired our first star stamp for decorating walls.’ Along with the stamps, they sold paints and rollers for decorating walls, furniture and textiles.

The couple built up a loyal customer base, but 10 years on, Sasha and Jon sensed that the fashion for decorating walls was tailing off. At a trade fair in New York, Sasha spotted that a new trend was emerging for personalisation; addresses and messages that made stationery more meaningful. ‘I brought the idea back, we discussed it and diversified,’ she says. So The English Stamp Company moved into selling stamps with ink pads. ‘The appeal of stamping letterheads, envelopes and tags lies in its simplicity – it’s quick, original and inexpensive,’ she says.

Sasha and her mum, artist Anna Macmiadhachain, drew up the designs, which can be used to give cards and »



Jon and Sasha run their business from an old Dorset barn that was formerly a dinosaur museum!

What we love most...

'THE SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PRIDE WE FEEL IN GIVING EMPLOYMENT TO PEOPLE IN AN AREA WITH LITTLE WORK'

paper a personal, handmade look. Then, four years ago, Sasha's daughter Bella, who is now 22, joined the company. 'Bella came up with the idea of doing wedding stationery with "Save the date" on it,' says Sasha. 'It had a huge impact on sales and changed the focus of our brand. It became less crafty and more design-led. People can order personalised stamps for their home or business, as well as customised stationery.'

The surrounding countryside greatly influences Sasha's designs. 'I'm keen on nature and am inspired by the sea. I head out with my camera and take photos, which are then turned into stamps. All in all, we have around 500 different designs.'

Social media has proved a blessing for the business. 'I do the photography for our website and look after our social

media pages, which are an ideal place to market our product,' says Sasha.

Stationery stamping has proved more profitable than interiors stamping, and the company moved to bigger premises, a barn across the field from where they live, which had previously been a dinosaur museum. Their growth has also allowed them to employ seven people. Such is their success, they were involved in the London 2012 Olympics supplying stamps for competitors and their equipment.

'We love the freedom of running our own enterprise,' says Sasha. 'We don't answer to anyone and we love living in the middle of nowhere. There's not a lot of work available on the Isle of Purbeck, so we are lucky to have created our own business, which means that we can live and work here and don't have to commute. The surroundings are inspirational.'

Sasha pays close attention to trends so that she can introduce them into their stamp range. 'For instance, the rustic woodland look is very big this year with lots of stag and pheasant motifs around so we have introduced stamps featuring them for the festive season.'

Christmas, as you would expect, is a particularly busy time for the business. Sasha and her team start designing the products early on in the year – they sell a range of around 100 designs with a seasonal theme. November and December are hectic months with members of the team attending Christmas fairs and everyone working hard to fulfil orders. Fabric inks are also in demand and they sell well during the festive season. 'It's fun to customise a tablecloth and napkins especially for Christmas,' she says.

Naturally, Sasha uses the stamps for her own Christmas cards and wrapping paper. 'People say they look forward to receiving them,' she says, 'and it's lovely to be able to use the stamps myself.'

**☎ The English Stamp Company,
01929 439117, englishstamp.com »**



Formerly an engineer, Jon creates each of the stamps from Sasha's designs.



Sasha and Bella put the final touches to their Christmas gift wrapping.



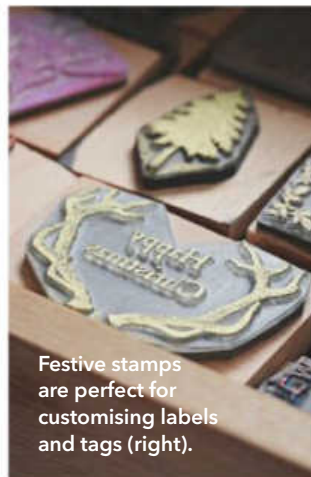
The star was the company's first stamp and it's still in great demand.



Pine cone and stag-head motifs are used to stamp Christmas cards in Sasha and Jon's home (right).



Local employees help during the hectic Christmas period.



Festive stamps are perfect for customising labels and tags (right).





ON OUR DOORSTEP...

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The couple enjoy the Dorset countryside with their children Rufus and Bella, and Bounder, a friend's black Labrador.



Small business advice

MAKE YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE

How to keep your company moving with the times



Small businesses tend to succeed if they are operating in a niche sector. Creating a business that focuses on a very specific product for a very specific market is often the path to good sales. That's exactly what Sasha and Jon Dorey had been doing for a number of years before the trend for interiors stencilling and stamping started to dip. They knew they needed to diversify and hit upon the new trend for stationery.

'Diversification is a protection,' says Maite Baron, who specialises in helping professionals rekindle their passion for life and reinvent themselves as successful business owners. 'When you only have one business, you only have one income stream. So, if consumer demand starts to fall away, or an alternative product comes along, your market can dry up almost overnight. Diversification on the other hand, can mean creating a suite of products or services that support each other or having several small businesses that sell different products altogether.'

Think ahead. 'As the saying goes, "If you're not moving forward, you're falling behind". So begin the process of diversification by looking first at your most popular product or service and who is buying it? What else might they be interested in? And just as importantly, who isn't buying it? This could reveal a market gap you could fill by creating an alternative product or service, or even developing a

secondary business entirely to meet a new demand. If you have a track record and credibility in one area, it could be relatively easy to gain traction with a complementary product or service.'

Use your existing business as a starting point. 'In business, getting up to speed quickly can be the difference between success and failure. By not spending time learning the ropes, you start earning money sooner, so it makes sense to see how you can repurpose your existing skills, experience and know-how for a new market, product or service. Diversification could simply mean presenting an existing product in a different way, to a different market or through a different channel as The English Stamp Company did. From providing stamps and paint to decorate walls, they moved into selling stamps and ink pads for stationery when the fashion for stencilling faded.'

Your existing customers matter. 'Finding new customers is expensive. It's much better to set about your diversification by marketing to your existing pool of customers. They already trust you, so it's sensible to use that to your advantage by offering what they are looking for now.'

Be different. 'In your own industry, if you see everyone heading in one direction, it probably makes sense to head in another. Bring your personality

and own interests into your business, then use this as a differentiator.'

Test under the radar. 'Don't give the game away. Go for a soft, under-cover launch before the real thing, so you can test and perfect your product or service and iron out any glitches. By the time your competitors realise what you're doing, you'll already have the advantage.'

Think suites. 'Consider creating a complementary suite of products or services that can all sit under one banner. They look right together, but they're not dependent on each other. The English Stamp Company extended its range by creating personalised wedding stationery, which has really taken off.'

Carry your reputation over. 'Make sure you gather great testimonials from customers or clients, and carry that reputation to your next business.'

Don't lose sight of your existing business. 'As you diversify you will have to juggle more and more balls, so make sure that you, or someone else, is dedicating enough time to both the diversification and to your core business, so both are healthy. 'Whatever new direction you go down, ideally make it something you love and enjoy - if you do, there's every chance your customers will, too.'

📞 Maite Baron, 020 8747 0644, maitebaron.com/blog.

The one lesson we've learned...

'BE AS FLEXIBLE AS POSSIBLE AND STAY AHEAD OF THE TRENDS'

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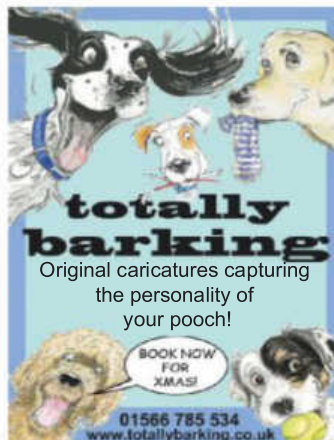
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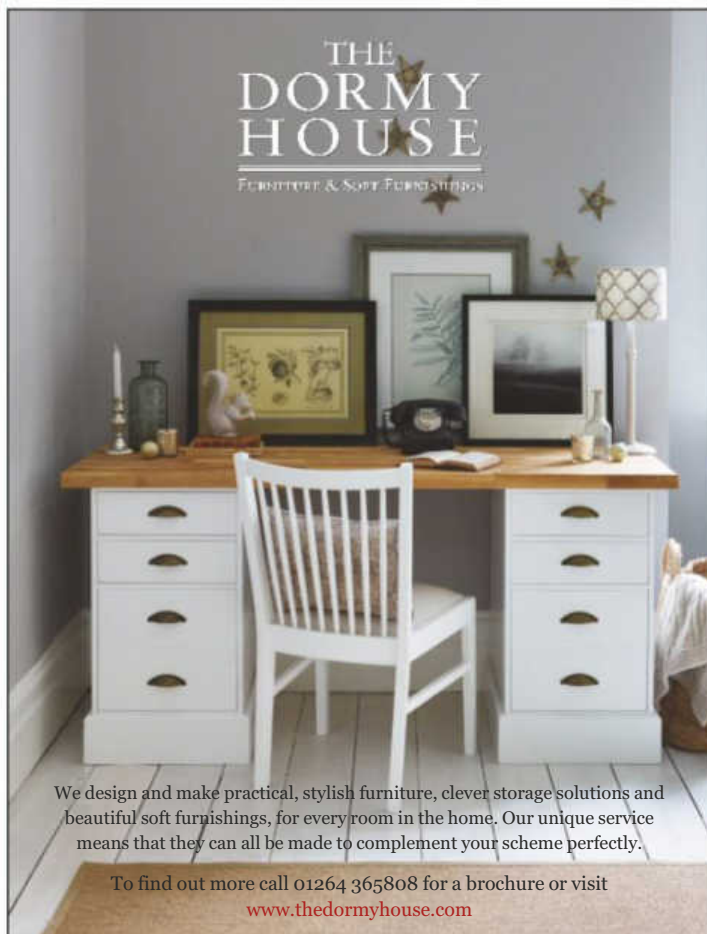
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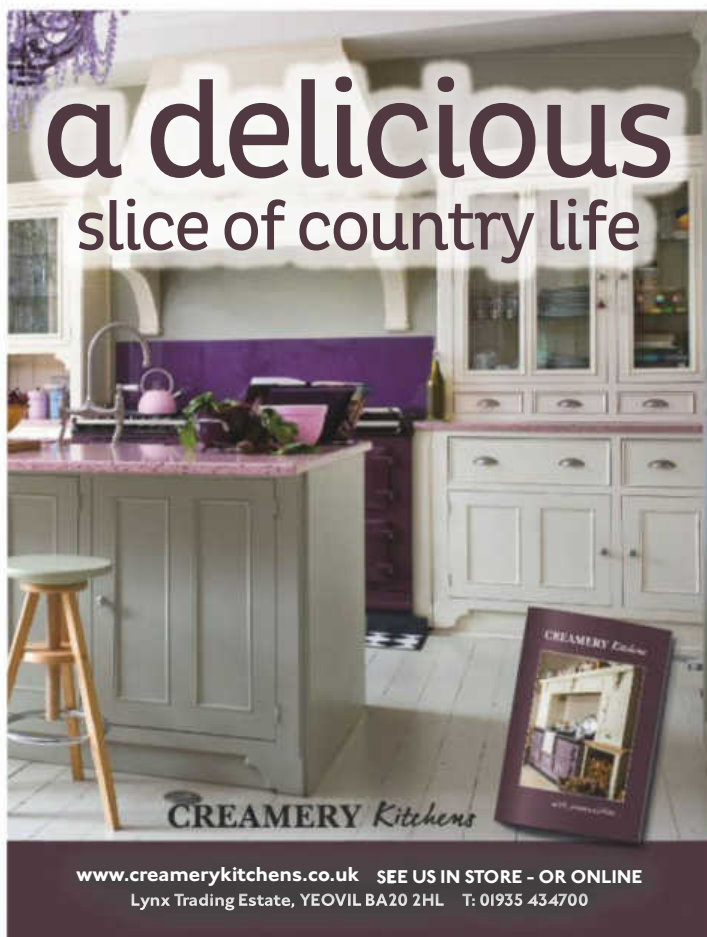
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‘I LOOK AT THIS GLORIOUS VIEW AT PERCH HILL EVERY DAY’

Gardener, flower arranger and cook Sarah Raven

My favourite view is from my desk in the barn, looking out over the new rose and herb garden to the Brightling Needle beyond. This marks the highest point in the Sussex Weald. I sit there, thinking and writing, looking up at that view throughout the day. We have solar pea lights in the olive trees out there during the winter, so it looks good at night, too. It's a view typical of Perch Hill, my home and garden.



There's lots of glass and a continuity between the inside spaces and outside. I love the transparency between the garden and the house. At the moment, right outside the glass doors, there is a pot with some grass, red millet, and every time I look up a different variety of garden bird is feasting on the millet seed.

The garden and surrounding fields here are deeply tied up with childhood memories. It was my botanist father, John, who got me interested in growing things. As a classics don at Cambridge, he was passionately involved with the natural world. We spent many weekends looking for wildflowers. And my parents had a beautiful garden, full of interesting plants they'd found in this country and abroad.

The garden here is interesting year round. In spring it's jam-packed with rich-coloured tulips, then in

summer lots of dark, velvety and highly scented roses come into bloom – we're organic here, so they're all healthy, vigorous types that grow well without the use of chemicals. The roses then overlap with the salvias – a huge swathe of them underplanting the roses to help keep them disease free. Salvia varieties such as 'Amistad' and 'Nachtvlinder' flower from June until November. I welcome visitors at open days and courses, sharing my passion for and knowledge of gardening.

We use the barn for our family Christmas lunch

[Sarah is married to the writer Adam Nicolson and has two daughters and three stepsons]. It's the biggest room we have, so big that we can fit in a massive tree. We move the sofas in there and have all our meals around my beautiful old oak desk. Last year, we potted two of the olive trees and brought them inside so that we could decorate them as well. But this year we're borrowing a house in London so that we can see friends and have a change of scene. We're just starting a big restoration of the farmhouse, so the builders will be in and we won't have a kitchen or log fire – to me, an essential part of Christmas in the country.

Sarah's new book, *Good Good Food*, is out on 19 May 2016 (Bloomsbury, £25). For details about courses and open days at Perch Hill Farm, visit sarahraven.com. Perch Hill Farm, Willingford Lane, Brightling, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5HP.

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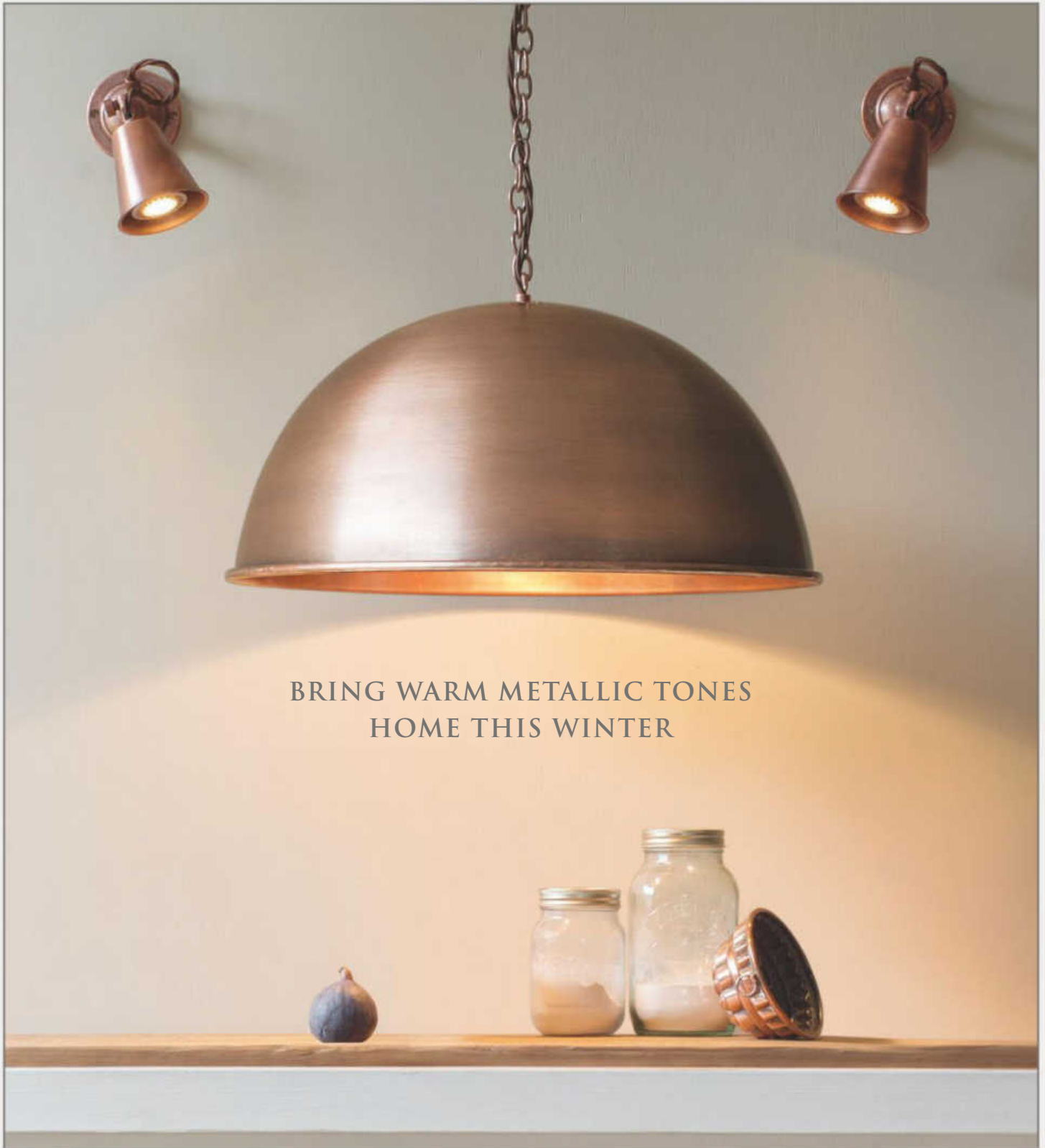
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